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A  
GUIDE to PRAYER.

OR,  
A Free and Rational Account  
OF THE  
GIFT, GRACE *and* SPIRIT  
OF  
PRAYER;

With Plain Directions how every  
Christian may attain them.

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By I. WATTS. K.

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*Lord, teach us to pray. Luke xi. 1.*

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L O N D O N:

Printed for Emanuel Matthews at the Bible in Paper-  
seller Row; and Sarah Cliff at the Three Crowns  
near Mercer's-Chappel, Cheapside. 1715.

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THE  
P R E F A C E  
O R  
A Short Account of the Design of  
this Treatise.



THE Duty of Prayer is so great and necessary a part of Religion, that every degree of Assistance towards the Discharge of it will be always acceptable to pious Minds. The inward and spiritual Performance of this Worship is taught us in many excellent Discourses, but a regular Scheme of Prayer as a Christian Exercise or a Piece of Holy Skill has been much neglected. The Form, Method, and Expression, together with other Attendances of it, such as Voice and Gesture, have been so little treated of, that few Christians have any clear or distinct Knowledge of them: And yet all these have too powerful an Influence upon the Soul in its most spiritual Exercises, and they properly fall under various Directions of Nature and

A 2                      Scripture.

## P R E F A C E.

*Scripture. Now while Institutions of Logick and Rhetorick abound, that teach us to reason aright and to speak well among Men, why should the Rules of speaking to God be so much untought?*

*'Tis a Glory to our Profession that there is a great number of Ministers in our Day and Nation who are happy in the Gift of Prayer, and exercise it continually in a honourable and useful manner. Yet they have been contented to direct others to this Attainment meerly by the Influence of a good Example. Thus we are taught to pray as some profess to teach French and Latin, i. e. only by Rote. Whereas those that learn by Rule as well as by Imitation acquire a greater Readiness of just and proper Expression in speaking those Languages upon every Occasion.*

*I am persuaded that one Reason of this Neglect has been the angry Zeal for Parties among us, which has discourag'd Men of sober and moderate Principles from attempting much on this Subject, while the Zealots have been betray'd into two Extremes. Some contend earnestly for precompos'd Set Forms of Prayer, and will worship God no other way. These have little need of any other Instructions but to be taught to Read well, since the Words, Matter, and Method of their Prayers are already appointed. Other violent Men in extrem Oposition to them have indulg'd the irregular wanderings of Thought and Expression, lest by a confinement to Rules they should seem to restrain the Spirit and return to carnal Ordinances.*

*But*

## PREFACE.

But if the Leaders of one Party had spent as much time in learning to Pray as they have done in reading Liturgies, and vindicating their Imposition; and if the warm Writers of the other Side, together with their just Cautions against quenching the Spirit, had more cultivated this divine Skill themselves, and taught Christians regularly how to pray, I believe the Practice of Free Prayer had been more universally approved, and the Fire of this Controversie had never raged to the Destruction of so much Charity.

My Design in this Treatise has been to write a Prayer-Book without Forms. And I have sought to maintain the middle way betwixt the distant Mistakes of contending Christians.

In describing the Nature of the Duty of Prayer, tho' I have not enlarged much on each Particular nor multiplied Subdivisions, yet I have endeavoured with the utmost Care and Exactness to divide the Duty into all its necessary Parts, that the Memory of younger Christians might be always furnished with some proper Matter and Method for their Addresses to God.

The Gift, Grace, and Spirit of Prayer, have of late Years been made the Subject of plentiful Ridicule: and while some have utterly abandon'd all Pretences to them, and turned the very Terms to Jest and Reproach; it must be confess'd that others have given too just Occasion for such Scandal, by explaining these Words in so exalted a Sense as befits nothing but Divine Inspiration. I have endeavour'd therefore to reduce



## P R E F A C E.

these Terms to their more proper and rational Meaning, and explain them in such a way as the wisest and best of Men of all Perswasions, who have not been warm'd with Party-zeal, have generally allow'd. And I have had this Design in my view, that plainer Christians among the Dissenters might understand what they themselves mean, when they speak of praying by a Gift, and praying by the Spirit; that they might not expose themselves to the Censure of talking without a Meaning, nor be charged with Enthusiasm by their Conforming Neighbours.

In discoursing of the Gift or Ability to pray, I have been large and particular, both in Directions to attain it, and in describing the Mistakes and Indecencies that Persons may be in danger of committing in this Duty; being well assured that we learn to avoid what is culpable, by a plain Representation of Faults and Follies, much better than by a bare Proposal of the best Rules and Directions.

But here I am prest between a double Difficulty, and already feel the Pain of displeasing some of my Readers.

If I should describe these Improperities of Speech and Action in a moderate degree, Scoffers would reproach a whole Party of Christians, and say, that I had Copy'd all from the Life; while my Friends would be ready to suspect that I had published some of the Errors of weaker Brethren.

On the other Hand, if I should represent these Faults in their utmost degree of Offensiveness, the  
Adver.



## PREFACE

Adversary indeed could scarce have Malice enough to believe any Preacher in our Day was guilty of them, but my Friends would tell me, I had plaid at Impertinencies, by exposing such Faults as no body practisest.

Now when two Evils lye before me, I would chuse the least. It is better to be Impertinent than a Publisher of Folly: and therefore I have set forth those Indecencies in their very worst Appearance, that they might be never practised. Upon this Account, I have been forced to borrow Instances of improper Expressions from antiquated Writers; and many of the Descriptions of irregular Voices and Gestures, from some obscure Persons of the last Age, whose Talent of Assurance was almost the only Qualification that made them Speakers in publick: and this I was constrain'd to do, because my Observations of the Prayers I have heard could never have supplied my Design.

Besides, had I described only some tolerable Follies, perhaps weak Men might have been ready to vindicate them, because they did not see Deformity enough to be blamed. But now the Instances I have given appear so disagreeable and ridiculous, that all Men must be convinced they ought to be avoided; and younger Christians, when they learn to pray, will keep at the greatest distance from all such Examples.

But 'tis a hard matter to attempt Reformation in any kind without giving Offence.

I have added also one short Chapter of the Grace of Prayer, that the Work might not appear

## P R E F A C E

near 200. Imperfect, tho' that has been abundantly and happily pursued in many Treatises; and is the Subject of daily Sermons.

In speaking of the Spirit of Prayer, I have try'd to obviate all Controversies that have arisen to trouble the Church, by giving what appeared to me the most natural Exposition of the chief Scriptures that refer to this matter; and superadding a reasonable and intelligible Account of what Hand the Spirit of God may be supposed to have in assisting his People in this part of Worship.

At the End of each Chapter, I have laid down many Rules borrow'd from Reason, Observation, and Holy Scripture, how every Christian may in some degree attain these desirable Blessings; and I have concluded the whole with a hearty Persuasive to covet the best Gifts, and seek after the most excellent way of the Performance of this Duty.

Perhaps some Persons may wonder that in a Treatise that professes to teach the Skill of Prayer, I should not once recommend the Prayer that our Lord taught his Disciples as a perfect Pattern for all Christians. But 'tis my Opinion, that Divine Wisdom gave it for other purposes; and if this Treatise meet with Acceptance in the World, I may hereafter venture to expose my Sentiments on the Lord's Prayer, if God shall ever give me Health to review and finish them, with a short Essay or two on the Personal Ministry of Christ upon Earth, which are proper to be joined with it.

These

## P R E F A C E.

These Institutions were at first compos'd for the use of a private Society of younger Men who were desirous to pray, and this may excuse the Style and way of Address in some Parts of the Discourse. It has lain silent by me several Years, and resisted many a Call to appear in Publick, in hopes of being more polish'd before its first Appearance. But when I shall have Health and Leisure to dress all my Thoughts to the best Advantage, that God only knows, whose Hand has long confin'd me. I am convinc'd at last, that it is better for to do something for God, tho' it be attended with Imperfections, than be guilty of perpetual Delays in hopes of better pleasing my self.

After all the Care I have taken to avoid Controversie, and express my self in such a way as might not be justly Offensive to any sober Christians, yet if I should prove so Unhappy as to say any thing Disagreeable to the Sentiments of some of my younger Readers, I must entreat them not to throw away the whole Treatise, and deprive themselves of all the Benefit they might obtain by other Parts of it. Nor should they load the whole Book with Reproaches and Censures, lest thereby they prevent others from reaping those Advantages toward Conversation with God, which the more inoffensive Pages might convey. An unwary Censure, or a rash and hasty Word thrown upon a Discourse, or a Sermon, a Preacher, or a Writer, hath sometimes done more Dis-service to Religion than could ever be recompens'd by many Recommendations. Permit therefore the little Book, that has an honest De-  
sign

## P. R E F A C E.

*sign to teach Creatures to hold Correspondence with their God, permit it to do all the Service that it can: Gently rectifie the Mistakes of it, to improve a second Edition, if it perish not in the first.*

*Had I found any Treatise that had answered my Designs, I had never given my self the Trouble of Writing this at first, nor ventured to expose it now. There are indeed several well-composed Forms of Devotion in the World, written by Ministers of the Conformist, and Non-Conformist Perswasion; and these are of excellent Use to instruct us in the Matter and Language of Prayer, if we maintain our holy Liberty, and do not tie our Thoughts down to the Words of Men. Mr. Henry's Method of Prayer is a judicious Collection of Scriptures, proper to the several Parts of that Duty. Mr. Murray has composed a Volume of Addresses to God, which he calls Closet Devotions on the principal Heads of Divinity in the very Phrases of Holy Scriptures. Both these, if rightly used, will afford happy Assistance to the humble and serious Worshipper. Those Six Sermons of Prayer, published since this was written, are the useful Labours of some of my valuable Friends, and have many divine Thoughts in them; but they take in the whole Compass of this Subject, in all the inward as well as outward Parts of the Worship; and therefore could not allow sufficient Room to enlarge upon that which is my great Design.*

*It is not necessary to inform the World, that Bishop Wilkins in his Discourse of the Gift of Prayer*



## P R E F A C E.

Prayer has been my chief Assistant toward the second Chapter of this Book; nor need I tell my Reader what Writings I have consulted of the learned and pious Dr. Owen, and others that have written for or against the Work of the Spirit in Prayer, in order to gain a clearer Light; nor what Hints I have borrow'd from the Treatise of a very judicious Author, with a fanciful Title imposed upon it by an unknown Hand, and called the Generation of Seekers, wherein several practical Cases about the Aids of the Spirit are largely and well handled; Tho' I had the Opportunity of knowing and consulting it only since this was in the Press.

But if there are any considerable Advances made here beyond the Labours of great Men in the last Age, I hope the World will excuse this Attempt; and if younger Christians by Perusal of these Papers shall find themselves improved in the holy Skill of Prayer, I shall share in their Joy, and assist them in the Work of Praise.





# PREFACE.

Prayer has been my chief Affliction towards the  
 Second Chapter of this Book; nor need I tell my  
 Reader what I have consisted of the  
 learned and pious Dr. Owen, and others that  
 have written for or against the Work of the Spirit;  
 in in Prayer, in order to give a candid I hope;  
 and what I have been doing in the Work of the Spirit.


It is a very pleasant Matter, with a pleasant  
 Taste imposed upon it by an unknown Hand,  
 and called the Generation of Serpents, serpents  
 several practical Cases about the Work of the Spirit  
 are largely and well handled; The I had the  
 Opportunity of having it printed in the Year 1711.

## ERRATA.

Page 47. line 15. read Cases. p. 105. l. 11. r. Gain.  
 p. 136. l. 4. r. a roving and observing Eye. p. 145.  
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# A GUIDE TO PRAYER

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## *The* INTRODUCTION

**P**RAYER is a Word of an extensive Sense in Scripture, and includes not only a Request or Petition for Mercies, but 'tis taken for the Address of a Creature on Earth to God in Heaven, about every Thing that concerns his God, his Neighbour, or himself, in this World or the World to come. It is that Converse which God hath allow'd us to maintain with himself above, while we are here below. It is that Language wherein a Creature holds Correspondence with his Creator, and wherein the Soul of a Saint often gets near

near to God, is entertain'd with great Delight, and as it were dwells with his Heavenly Father for a short Season before he comes to Heaven. It is a glorious Privilege that our Maker hath indulged to us; and a necessary part of that Obedience which he hath required of us, and that at all Times and Seasons, and in every Circumstance of Life; according to those Scriptures; *1 Thess. v. 17. Pray without ceasing; Phil. iv. 6. In every thing by Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgiving let your Requests be made known to God. Eph. vi. 18. Praying always with all Prayer and Supplication.*

*Prayer* is a part of Divine Worship that is required of all Men, and is to be performed either with the Voice, or only in the Heart, and is called Vocal or Mental Prayer. 'Tis commanded to single Persons in their private Retirements in a more solemn and continued Method or Manner; and in the midst of the Businesses of Life, by secret and sudden liftings up of the Soul to God. It belongs also to the Communities of Men, whether they be Natural as Families, or Civil as Corporations, Parliaments, Courts or Societies for Trade and Business; and to Religious Communites, as when Persons meet on any pious

## *The Introduction.*

3

ous Design they should seek their God: 'Tis required of the Churches of Christians in an especial Manner, for the House of God is the House of Prayer. But I shall not enlarge on these Distinctions here, my Design being more General, and shall only consider Prayer as a *Duty* to be performed, by the Exercise of our *Gifts* and our *Graces*, and in both these through the Assistance of the Holy Spirit.

This is therefore the Order in which I shall deliver my Thoughts on this Subject.

I. *First* I shall speak of the Nature of Prayer as a Duty of Worship.

II. *Secondly*, As it is to be performed by the Gifts or Abilities God has bestowed upon us.

III. *Thirdly*, As it must be attended with the Exercise of our Graces.

IV. *Fourthly*, As we are assisted in it by the Spirit of God: And conclude all with an earnest Address to Christians to seek after this Holy Skill of Converse with God.

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CHAP.





## C H A P. I.

*The Nature of Prayer.*

**I**N the Discourse of Prayer considered as a Duty of Worship required of us, that we may understand the whole Nature of it better, let it be divided into its several Parts; and I think they may be all included in these following, namely,

Invocation, Adoration, Confession, Penitition, Pleading, Profession or Self-Dedication, Thanksgiving, and Blessing; of each of which I shall speak particularly,

## S E C T. I.

*Of Invocation.*

**T**HE *First* part of Prayer is *Invocation*, or Calling upon God; and it may include in it these three Things.

1. *A making Mention of one or more of the Names or Titles of God*, and thus we do as it were bespeak the Person to whom we Pray. As you have abundant Names in the Prayers that are delivered down to us in Holy Scripture: “*Our Lord*”



“ Lord, my God. Most high and most  
 “ Holy God and Father. O God of  
 “ *Israel* that dwellest between the Che-  
 “ rubims. Almighty God and Everlast-  
 “ ing King. Our Father which art in  
 “ Heaven. O God that keepest Cove-  
 “ nant; and several others.

2. *A Declaration of our Desire and De-  
 sign to Worship him.* “ Unto thee do  
 “ we lift up our Souls. We draw near unto  
 “ thee as our God. We come into thy  
 “ Presence. We that are but Dust and  
 “ Ashes take upon us to speak to thy Ma-  
 “ jesty. We bow our selves before thee  
 “ in humble Addresses; or such like.  
 And here it may not be amiss to menti-  
 on briefly one or two general Expressi-  
 ons of our own Unworthiness.

3. *A Desire of his Assistance and Ac-  
 ceptance,* under a Sense of our own In-  
 sufficiency and Unworthiness. in such  
 Language as this is, “ Lord, quicken  
 “ us to call upon thy Name. Assist us  
 “ by thy Spirit in our Access to the  
 “ Mercy Seat. Raise our Hearts to-  
 “ wards thy Self. Teach us to approach  
 “ thee as becomes Creatures, and do  
 “ thou draw near to us as a God of Grace.  
 “ *Hearken to the Voice of my Cry, my King,*  
 “ *and my God, for unto thee will I pray.*  
 “ In the 5th *Psalms*, v. 2. in which

Words you have all these three Parts of Invocation express'd.

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## S E C T. II.

### *Of Adoration.*

**T**HE *Second* Part of Prayer is *Adoration*, or Honour paid to God by the Creature, and it contains these four Things.

1. *A Mention of his Nature as God*, with the highest Admiration and Reverence: And this includes his most original Properties and Perfections, (*viz.*) his self-sufficient Existence; that he is God of, and from himself. His Unity of Essence, that there is no other God besides him. His unconceivable Subsistence in three Persons; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; which Mystery of the Trinity is a most proper Object of our Adoration and Wonder, since it so much surpasses our Understanding. His incomprehensible Distance from all Creatures, and his infinite Superiority of Nature above them, seems also to claim a Place here. The Language of this Part of Prayer runs thus; "Thou  
" art God and there is none else, thy  
" Name alone is *Jehovah* the most high;  
" who in the Heavens can be compared  
to

“ to the Lord, or who among the Sons  
“ of the Mighty can be likened to our  
“ God? All Nations before thee are as  
“ Nothing, and they are counted in  
“ thy Sight less than nothing and Va-  
“ nity. Thou art the First and the  
“ Last, the only True and the Li-  
“ ving God; thy glorious Name is ex-  
“ alted above all Blessing and Praise.

2. *The Mention of his several Attri-  
butes* with due Expressions of Praise,  
and with the Exercise of suitable Grace  
and Affection: As his Power, his Ju-  
stice, his Wisdom, his Sovereignty, his  
Holiness, his Goodness and Mercy. A-  
bundance of which sort of Expressions  
you find in Scripture in those Addresses  
that the Saints have made to God in all  
Ages. “ Thou art very great O Lord,  
“ thou art cloathed with Honour and  
“ Majesty, thou art the Blessed and only  
“ Potentate, King of Kings and Lord of  
“ Lords, all Things are naked and o-  
“ pen before thine Eyes, Thou searchest  
“ the Heart of Man, but how unsearch-  
“ able is thine Understanding and thy  
“ Power is unknown. Thou art of pur-  
“ rer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, Thy  
“ Mercy endures for ever, Thou art  
“ slow to Anger, abundant in Goodness,  
“ and thy Truth reaches to all Genera-

tions. These Meditations are of great use in the Beginning of our Prayers, to abase us before the Throne of God, to awaken our Reverence, our Dependence, our Faith and Hope, our Humility and our Joy.

3. *The Mention of his several Works,* of Creation, of Providence, and of Grace, with proper Praises. For as God is Glorious in himself in his Nature and Attributes, so by the Works of his Hands hath he manifested that Glory to us, and it becomes us to ascribe the same Glory to him. *i. e.* to tell him humbly what a Sense we have of the several Perfections he hath revealed in these Works of his; in such Language as this. "Thou Lord  
"hast made the Heavens and the Earth.  
"The whole Creation is the Work of  
"thine Hands. Thou rulest among the  
"Armies of Heaven, and among the  
"Inhabitants of the Earth thou doest  
"what pleases thee. Thou hast revealed  
"thy Goodness towards Mankind;  
"And hast magnified thy Mercy above  
"all thy Name. Thy Works of Nature  
"and of Grace are full of Wonder,  
"and sought out by all those that have  
"Pleasure in them.



4. *The Mention of his Relation to us* as a Creator, as a Father, as a Redeemer, as a King, as an Almighty Friend, and our Everlasting Portion. And here it will not be improper to make mention of the Name of Christ, in and through whom alone we are brought nigh to God, and made his Children: By whose Incarnation and Attonement he becomes a God and Father to sinful Men, and appears their reconciled Friend. And by this Means we draw still nearer to God, in every Part of this Work of Adoration.

When we consider his Nature we stand afar off from him as Creatures from a God; for he is infinitely superior to us: When we speak of his Attributes, there seems to grow a greater Acquaintance between God and us, while we tell him that we have learnt something of his Power, his Wisdom, his Justice and his Mercy. But when we proceed to make Mention of the several Works of his Hands, wherein he hath sensibly discovered himself to our Understandings we seem yet to approach higher to God; and when at last we can and do call him our God, from a Sense of his special Relation to us in Christ, then we gain the nearest Access.



ter prepared for the following Parts of this Worship.

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S E C T. III.

*Of Confession.*

**T**HE *Third* part of Prayer consists in *Confession*, which may also be divided into these Four Heads.

1. *An humble Confession of the Meanness of our Nature in its Original.* Our Distance from God as we are Creatures: Our Subjection to him, and our constant Dependence on him. "Thou O Lord  
"art in Heaven, but we on the Earth,  
"our Being is but of Yesterday, and  
"our Foundation is in the Dust. What  
"is Man that thou art mindful of him,  
"and the Son of Man that thou should-  
"est visit him; Man that is a Worm,  
"and the Son of Man that is but a  
"Worm! 'Tis in thee that we live,  
"move and have our Being, thou with-  
"holdest thy Breath and we die.

2. *A Confession of our Sins*, both Original which belongs to our Nature, and Actual that has been found in the Course of our Lives. We should confess our Sins under a Sense of the Guilt of them, as well as under the deep and mournful

mournful Impressions of the Power of Sin in our Hearts. We should confess the Sins that we have been guilty of in Thought, as well as the Iniquities of our Lips and of our Lives. Our Sins of Omission and Sins of Commission; the Sins of our Childhood and of our riper Years; Sins against the Law of God, and Sins more particularly committed against the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sometimes it is convenient and necessary to enter into a more particular Detail of our various Faults and Follies. We should mourn before God because of our Pride and Vanity of Mind, the Violence of our Passions, our Earthly-mindedness and Love of this World, our Sensuality and Indulgence of our Flesh, our carnal Security and Unthankfulness under plentiful Mercies, and our Fretfulness and Impatience or sinful Dejection in a time of Trouble; our Neglect of Duty and want of Love to God, our Unbelief and Hardness of Heart, our Slothfulness and Decay in Religion, the Dishonours we have brought to God, and all our Miscarriages towards our Fellow Creatures. And these may be aggravated on purpose to humble our Souls yet more before God, by a Reflection upon their Variety

erty and their Multitude. How often they have been repeated even before and since we knew God savingly; that we have committed them against much Light; and that we have sinned against much Love, and that after many Rebukes of the Word and Providence, and many Consolations from the Gospel and Spirit of God. You find this Part of Prayer very plentifully insisted and enlarged upon, among those Examples that are left us in the Word of God.

And with these Confessions we must thus bewail and take Shame to our selves.

“ We are ashamed, and blush to lift up  
 “ our Faces before thee Our God, for  
 “ our Iniquities are increased over our  
 “ Head, and our Trespases grown up to  
 “ the Heavens. Behold we are vile, what  
 “ shall we answer thee, we will lay our  
 “ Hand upon our Mouth, and put our  
 “ Mouth in the Dust if so be there may  
 “ be Hope.

3. *A Confession of our Desert of Punishment, and our Unworthiness of Mercy, arising from the Sense that we have of all our aggravated Sins, in such Expressions as these.* “ We deserve O Lord  
 “ to be forever cast out of thy Presence;  
 “ and to be eternally cut off from all  
 “ Hope of Mercy. We deserve to fall  
 “ under

" under the Curse of that Law which  
 " we have broken; and to be for ever  
 " banished from the Blessings of that  
 " Gospel which we have so long re-  
 " fused. We have sinned against much  
 " Mercy, that we are no longer worthy  
 " to be called thy Children. We are  
 " utterly unworthy of any of those Fa-  
 " vours that are promised in thy Word,  
 " and which thou hast given us Encou-  
 " ragement to hope for. If thou con-  
 " tend with us for our Transgressions,  
 " we are not able to answer thee, O  
 " Lord, nor to make Excuse for one of  
 " a thousand; if thou shouldst mark  
 " iniquities, O Lord who shall stand?  
 " But there is Forgiveness with thee,  
 " there is Mercy and plenteous Redem-  
 " ption.

4. *A Confession or humble Representation*  
*of our Wants and Sorrows of every*  
*kind.* These Representations which  
 will fall under the next ready but it  
 necessary they should be spread before  
 God, and poured out as it were in his  
 Presence; for God loves to hear us tell  
 him what a Sinner our Souls have  
 our own particular Necessities and Trou-  
 bles. He loves to hear us complain be-  
 fore him when we are under any Pre-



asures from his Hand, or when we stand in Need of Mercies of any Kind.

## S E C T. IV.

### Of Petition.

THE *Fourth* Part of Prayer consists in *Petition*, which includes in it a *Desire of Deliverance from Evil, and a Request of Mercies to be bestow'd*: And on both these Accounts we must offer up our Petitions to God for our selves and our Fellow-Creatures.

The Evils we pray to be delivered from, are of a Temporal, Spiritual, or Eternal Kind. “ O Lord take away the  
 “ Guilt of our Sins by the Attonement  
 “ of thine own Son. Subdue the Power  
 “ of our Iniquities by thine own Spirit.  
 “ Deliver us from the natural Darknes  
 “ of our own Minds, from the Corru  
 “ ption of our Hearts, and perverse  
 “ Tendencies of our Appetites and Pas  
 “ sions. Free us from the Temptations  
 “ to which we are expos'd, and the  
 “ daily Snares that attend us. We are  
 “ in constant Danger whilst we are in  
 “ this Life, let the watchful Eye of our  
 “ God be upon us for our Defence. De  
 “ liver us from thine everlasting Wrath,  
 “ and

“ and from that eternal Punishment that  
“ is due to our Sins in Hell. Save us  
“ from the Power of our Enemies in  
“ this World, and from all the painful  
“ Evils that we have justly exposed our-  
“ selves to by sinning against thee.

The Good we desire to be conferred upon us, is also of a temporal, spiritual, or eternal Nature. As we pray for the Pardon of all our Iniquities for the Sake of the great Attonement, the Death of our Redeemer, so we beg of God the Justification of our Persons through the Righteousness of his own Son *Jesus* Christ, and our Acceptance with God unto eternal Life. We pray for the Sanctification of all the Powers of our Natures by his holy Spirit, for his enlightening Influences, to teach us the Knowledge of God in Christ *Jesus*, as well as to discover to us the Evil of Sin, and our Danger by it. We pray for the Consolation of the Spirit of God ; and that he would not only work Faith, and Love, and every Grace in our Hearts, but give us bright and plentiful Evidences of his own Work, and of our Interest in the Love of God. We say unto God, “ O Thou that hast the Hearts  
“ of all Men in thine Hand, form our  
“ Hearts according to thine own Will,  
“ and

and according to the Image of thine  
own Son: Be thou our Light and our  
Strength, make us run in the Ways  
of Holiness; and let all the Means of  
Grace be continued to us, and be made  
serviceable for the great Ends for  
which thou hast appointed them. Pre-  
serve thy Gospel amongst us, and let  
all thy Providences be sanctified. Let  
thy Mercies draw us nearer to thy self  
as with the Cords of Love; and let  
the several Strokes of thine afflicting  
Hand wean us from Sin, mortifie us  
to this World, and make us ready for  
a Departure hence whensoever thou  
pleasest to call us. Guide us by thy  
Counsels, and secure us by thy Grace,  
in all our Travels through this dan-  
gerous Wilderness, and at last give us a  
Triumph over Death, and a rich and  
abundant Entrance into the Kingdom  
of thy Son in Glory. But since while  
we are here we wear these Bodies of  
Flesh about us, and there are many  
Things necessary to support our Lives,  
and to make them easy and comfor-  
table, we intreat thou would'st be-  
stow these Conveniences and Refresh-  
ments upon us, so far as is consistent  
with thine own Glory and the Designs  
of thy Grace. Let our Health, our  
Strength

“ Strength, and our Peace be maintained, and let Holiness to the Lord be inscribed upon them all, that whatsoever we receive from thine Hands may be improved to thine Honour, and our own truest Advantage; heal our Diseases, and pardon our Iniquities, that our Souls may ever bless thee.

And as we are required to offer up Petitions for ourselves, and make our own Requests known to God, so we are commanded to make *Supplication for all Saints*, *Ephes. vi. 18.* and to offer up *Prayer and Intercession for all Men*, *1 Tim. ii. 1.* In general we must pray for the Church of Christ, for *Zion* lies near to the Heart of God, and her Name is written upon the Palms of the Hands of our Redeemer; and the Welfare of *Zion* should be much upon our Hearts; we ought ever to have the tenderest Concern for the whole Church of God in the World: His Church he values above Kingdoms and Nations; and therefore if we distinguish Degrees of Fervency in Prayer, we ought to plead more earnestly with God for his Church, than for any Nation or Kingdom, that he would enlarge the Borders of the Dominion of Christ, that he would spread his Gospel among the Heathens, and make



the Name of Christ known and glorious from the rising of the Sun to its going down : That he would call in the remainder of his ancient People the *Jews*, and that he would bring the Fulness of the *Gentiles* into his Church. That he would pour down a more abundant Measure of his own Spirit, to carry on his own Work upon the Earth. And we are to send up longing and earnest Wishes to Heaven that the Spirit may descend and be diffused in plentiful Degrees upon Churches, upon Ministers, upon Families, and upon all the Saints. We are to pray that God would deliver his Church from the Power of persecuting Enemies ; that he would restrain the Wrath of Man, and suffer not the Wicked to triumph over the Righteous. We are also in particular to request of God Mercy for the Nation to which we belong ; that Liberty and Peace may be established and flourish in it ; for Governors that rule over us, in Places of Supream Authority or Subordinate ; That Wisdom and Faithfulness may be conferred upon them from Heaven, to manage those Affairs God hath entrusted them with on Earth. We must pray for our Friends, and those that are nearly related to us, that God would

would deliver them from all the Evils they feel or fear, and bestow upon them all the Good we wish for our selves here or hereafter. We must also pray for our Enemies, for that is a noble Singularity and Glory of our Religion.

Here let it be observ'd, that when we pray for those Things which are absolutely Necessary to the Glory of God or to our own Salvation, we may use a more full and fervent Importunity in Prayer, we may say, " Lord without the Pardon of our Sins we cannot rest satisfy'd; without the Renovation of our Natures by thy Grace, our Souls can never rest easie; without the Hopes of Heaven we can never be at Peace, and in these Respects will never let thee go till thou bless Us. For Zion's sake we will not hold our Peace, and for the sake of thy *Jerusalem*, thy Glory, thy Church in the World, we will give thee no Rest till thou hast made her the Joy of the Earth.

But on the other hand, when we plead with God for those Mercies or Comforts upon which our Salvation or his own Glory do not necessarily depend, we dare not use so absolute an Importunity in Prayer; but we must learn to limit  
our

our Petitions in such Language as this:  
 " If it be consistent with thine Eter-  
 " nal Counsels, with the Purposes of  
 " thy Grace and the great Ends of thy  
 " Glory, then bestow upon us such a  
 " Blessing; if it may be for the true In-  
 " terest of our Souls, and for thine Ho-  
 " nour in the World, then let this Fa-  
 " vour be granted us; otherwise we  
 " would learn to resign our selves to  
 " thy wiser Determination, and say  
 " Father, not our Wills but thine be  
 " done.

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## SECT. V.

### *Of Pleading.*

THE Fifth part of Prayer may be cal-  
 led *Pleading with God*; which tho'  
 it be not so distinct a Part by its self,  
 but rather belongs to the Work of Pe-  
 tition and Request, yet 'tis so very large  
 and diffusive that it may well be sepa-  
 rated by its self, and treated of distinctly.  
 Pleading with God, or arguing our  
 Case with him in a fervent yet humble  
 Manner, is one part of that Importuni-  
 ty in Prayer which Scripture so much  
 recommends. This is what all the Saints of  
 old have practised; what *Job* resolves to  
 engage

engage in, *Job xxiii. 4.* If I could get near to God *I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.* This is what the Prophet *Jeremy* practises, *Jer. xii. 1.* *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee, yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments; wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?* We are not to suppose that our Arguments can have any real Influence on God's own Will, and persuade him contrary to what he was before inclined; but as he condescends to talk with us after the manner of Men, so he admits us to talk with him in the same manner too, and encourages us to plead with him as though he were inwardly and really moved, and prevailed upon by our Importunities. As you find *Moses* is said to have prevailed upon God for the Preservation of his People *Israel*, when he seemed resolved upon their Destruction, *Exod. xxxii. 7, 14.* In this Work of Pleading with God Arguments are almost Infinite, but the chief of them may be reduced to the following Heads,

I. *We may plead with God, from the Greatness of our Wants, either for our Sorrow, whether it be for the Soul or the Body, for the present or the Life to come, to our sorrow,*



for whom we pray. We may draw Arguments for Deliverance from the particular kind of Afflictions that we labour under. “ My Sorrows, O Lord, are  
“ such as overpress me, and endanger  
“ my dishonouring of thy Name and thy  
“ Gospel. My Pains and my Weak-  
“ nesses hinder me from thy Service,  
“ that I am rendred useless upon Earth  
“ and a Cumberer of the Ground: They  
“ have been already of so long Conti-  
“ nuance that I fear my Flesh will not  
“ be able to hold out, nor my Spirit  
“ to bear up, if thine hand abide thus  
“ heavy upon me. If this Sin be not  
“ subdued in me, or that Temptation re-  
“ moved, I fear I shall be turned aside  
“ from the Paths of Religion, and let  
“ go my Hope. Thus from the Kind,  
Degree, or Duration of our Difficulties  
we may draw Arguments for Relief.

2. *The several Perfections of the Nature of God*, are another Head of Arguments in Prayer. “ For thy Mercy  
“ sake, O Lord, save me: Thy Loving-  
“ kindness is Infinite, let this Infinite  
“ Loving-kindness be displayed in my  
“ Salvation. Thou art wise, O Lord,  
“ and though mine Enemies are crafty,  
“ Thou canst disappoint their Devices:  
“ And thou knowest how by thy won-  
“ drous

" drous Counsels to turn my Sorrows  
 " into Joy. Thou canst find out a way  
 " for my Relief, when all Creatures stand  
 " afar off and say, that they see no way  
 " to help me. Thou art Almighty and  
 " All-Sufficient: Thy Power can sup-  
 " press my Adversaries at once, vanquish  
 " the Tempter, break the Powers of  
 " Darkness to Pieces, release me from  
 " the Chains of my Corruption, and  
 " bring me into glorious Liberty. Thou  
 " art Just and Righteous, and wilt thou  
 " let the Enemy oppress for ever? Thou  
 " art Sovereign, and all Things are at  
 " thy Command: Thou canst say to  
 " Pains and Diseases Go or Come; speak  
 " therefore the Sovereign word of Heal-  
 " ing, and my Flesh and Soul shall praise  
 " thee. Thou delightest in pardoning  
 " Grace; 'tis the Honour of our God  
 " to forgive; therefore let my Iniqui-  
 " ties be all cancell'd through the abun-  
 " dance of thy rich Mercy.

3. Another Argument in pleading with  
 God may be drawn *from the several Re-*  
*lations in which God stands unto Men,*  
*particularly to his own People.* " Lord  
 " thou art my Creator, wilt thou not  
 " have a Desire to the Work of thine  
 " Hands? hast thou not made me and  
 " fashioned me, and wilt thou now de-  
 " stroy

“ destroy me? Thou art my Governor  
 “ and my King, to whom should I fly  
 “ for Protection but to thee, when the  
 “ Enemies of thine Honour and of my  
 “ Soul beset me around? Art thou not  
 “ my Father? and hast thou not called  
 “ me one of thy Children? and given  
 “ me a Name and a Place among thy  
 “ Sons and thy Daughters? Why should  
 “ I look like one cast out of thy Sight,  
 “ or that belongs to the Family of Sa-  
 “ tan? Are not the Bowels of a Father  
 “ with thee, and tender Compassions?  
 “ why should one of thy poor and weak  
 “ and helpless Children be neglected or  
 “ forgotten? Art thou not my God in  
 “ Covenant, and the God and Father  
 “ of my Lord Jesus Christ, by whom  
 “ that Covenant is ratify’d? under that  
 “ Relation I would plead with thee for  
 “ all necessary Mercies.

“ The various and particular Promi-  
 “ ses of the Covenant of Grace, are ano-  
 “ ther Rank of Arguments to use in Pray-  
 “ er. “ Enlighten me O Lord, and par-  
 “ don me, and sanctifie my Soul; and  
 “ bestow Grace and Glory upon me  
 “ according to that Word of thy Pro-  
 “ mise on which thou hast caused me  
 “ to hope. Remember thy Word, is  
 “ yea in Heaven, ’tis recorded among  
 “ the

“ the Articles of thy sweet Covenant,  
“ that I must receive Light and Love  
“ and Strength and Joy and Happiness;  
“ and art thou not a faithful God to  
“ fulfill every one of those Promises?  
“ What if Heaven and Earth must pass  
“ away, yet thy Covenant stands upon  
“ two immutable Pillars, thy Promise  
“ and thine Oath; and now I have fled  
“ for Refuge, to lay hold on this Hope,  
“ let me have strong Consolation. Re-  
“ member thy Covenant made with thy  
“ Son in the Days of Eternity, and let  
“ the Mercies there promised to all his  
“ Seed be bestowed upon me according  
“ to my various Wants. This calling  
to Remembrance the Covenant of God  
hath been often of great Efficacy and  
Prevalence in the Prayers of the ancient  
Saints.

5. *The Name and Honour of God in the World*, is another powerful Argument.

“ What wilt thou do for thy great  
“ Name, if *Israel* should be cut off or  
“ perish? *Joshua* vii. 9. If thy Saints  
“ go down to the Grave in multitudes,  
“ who shall praise thee in the Land of  
“ the Living? The Dead cannot cele-  
“ brate thee, nor make mention of thy  
“ Name and Honours as I do this Day:  
This was the Pleading of *Hezekiah*,  
Isaiah



*Isaiah xxxviii. 18.* And *David* uses the same Language, *Psal. vi. 5.* For thy Name sake was a mighty Argument in all the ancient Times of the Church.

6. *Former Experiences of our selves and others,* are another set of Arguments to make use of in Prayer. Our Lord *Jesus Christ* in that Prophetical *Psal. Psal. xxii. 5.* is represented as using this Argument, "Our Fathers cried unto thee O Lord, and were delivered; they trusted in thee, and they were not confounded; let me be a Partaker of the same Favour whilst I cry unto thee, and make thee my Trust: Thou hast never said to the Seed of *Jacob*, seek ye my Face in vain; and let it not be said that thy poor Servant has now sought thy Face, and has not found thee. Often have I received Mercy in a way of return to Prayer; Often hath my Soul drawn near unto thee, and been comforted in the midst of Sorrows; Often have I taken out fresh Supplies of Grace according to my need, from the Treasures of thy Grace that are in Christ; and shall the Door of these Treasures be shut against me now? Shall I receive no more Favours from the hand of my God, that has heretofore dealt them so plentifully to me? Now how improper soever this

this sort of Argument may seem to be used in Courts of Princes, or to intreat the Favour of Great Men, yet God loves to hear his own People make use of it: For though Men are quickly weary of multiplying their Bounties, yet the more we receive from God, if we humbly acknowledge it to him, the more we are like to receive still.

7. The most powerful and most prevailing Argument, is *the Name and Mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ*. And though there be some Hints or Shadows of the use of it in the Old Testament, yet it was never taught us in a plain and exprefs manner till a little before our Saviour left this World. *John xvi. 23, 24. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my Name, ask and ye shall receive that your joy may be full. Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name he will give it you.* This seems to be reserved for the peculiar Pleasure and Power of the Duty of Prayer under the Gospel. We are taught to make mention of the Name of Jesus the only begotten and Eternal Son, of God, as a Method to obtain our biggest Requests and fullest Salvation: And in such Language as this we should address the Father, "Lord let my Sins be forgiven for the sake of that Love which,

“ thou bearest thine own Son, for the  
“ sake of that Love which thy Son  
“ beareth to thee; for the sake of his  
“ humbled State, when he took Flesh  
“ upon him, that he might look like  
“ a Sinner and be made a Sacrifice, tho’  
“ himself was free from Sin; for the  
“ sake of his perfect and painful Obe-  
“ dience, which has given compleat  
“ Honour to thy Law; for the sake of  
“ the Curse which he bore, and the  
“ Death which he suffered, which hath  
“ glorified thine Authority, and ho-  
“ noured thy Justice more than ’twas  
“ possible for my Sins to have affronted  
“ it: Remember his dying Groans;  
“ Remember his Agonies when the  
“ Hour of Darkness was upon him;  
“ and let not the Powers of Darkness  
“ prevail over me: Remember the Day  
“ when thou stoodest afar off from thine  
“ own Son, and he cryed out as one  
“ forsaken of God, and let me have  
“ thine Everlasting Presence with me;  
“ Let me never be forsaken, since thy  
“ Son hath born that Punishment. A-  
gain, we may plead with God the In-  
tercession of Jesus our High-Priest a-  
bove: “ Father, we would willingly  
“ ask thee for nothing but what thy  
“ Son already asks thee for: We would  
“ willingly

" willingly request nothing at thine  
 " Hands, but what thine own Son re-  
 " quests before-hand for us : Look up-  
 " on the Lamb as he had been slain in  
 " the midst of the Throne; Look up-  
 " on his pure and perfect Righteousness  
 " and that Blood with which our High-  
 " Priest is entred into the highest Hea-  
 " vens, and in which for ever he ap-  
 " pears before thee to make Intercessi-  
 " on; and let every Blessing be bestow-  
 " ed upon me which that Blood could  
 " purchase, and which that Great, that  
 " Infinite Petitioner pleads for at thy  
 " right Hand. What canst thou deny  
 " thine own Son, for he hath told us,  
 " that thou hearest him always; for the  
 " sake of that Son of thy Love deny us  
 " not.

Thus I have finished this *Fifth* Part  
 of Prayer which consists in Pleading with  
 God.

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## S E C T. VI.

### *Of Profession or Self-Dedication.*

**T**HE *Sixth* part of Prayer, consists in  
 a *Profession or Self-Dedication.*

This is very seldom mentioned by Wri-



ters as a part of Prayer; but to me it appears so very necessary in its Nature, and so distinct from all the rest, that it ought to be treated of separately as well as any other part; and may be divided under these four Heads.

1. *A Profession of our Relation to God.* And it is worth while sometimes for a Saint to draw near unto God, and to tell him that he is the Lord's: That he belongs to his Family: That he is one of his Household: That he stands among the number of his Children: That his Name is written in his Covenant: And there is a great Deal of Spiritual Delight and Soul-Satisfaction arises from such Appeals to God concerning our Relation to him.

2. *A Profession of our former Transactions with God.* " Lord we have given  
 " our selves up unto thee, and chosen  
 " thee for our Eternal Portion and our  
 " Highest Good; we have seen the In-  
 " sufficiency of Creatures to make us  
 " happy, and we have betaken our selves  
 " to a higher Hope; we have beheld  
 " Christ Jesus the Saviour in his perfect  
 " Righteousness, and in his All-suffi-  
 " cient Grace; we have put our Trust  
 " in him, and we have made our Cove-  
 " nant with the Father by the Sacrifice  
 " of

“ of the Son; we have often drawn  
“ near to thee in thine Ordinances; we  
“ have ratified and confirmed the Holy  
“ Covenant at thy Table; as well as  
“ have been devoted to thee by the ini-  
“ tial Ordinance of Baptism; we have  
“ given up our Names to God in his  
“ House; and we have as it were sub-  
“ scribed with our Hands to be the  
“ Lord's.

3. *A present Surrender of our selves to God, and a Profession of the present Exercise of our several Affections and Graces towards him. And this is sweet Language in Prayer when the Soul is in a right Frame.* “ Lord, I confirm  
“ all my former Dedications of my self  
“ to thee; and be all my covenantings  
“ for ever ratified. Or if I did never  
“ yet sincerely give my self up to the  
“ Lord, I do it now with the greatest  
“ Solemnity, and from the bottom of  
“ my Heart: I commit my guilty Soul  
“ into the Hands of Jesus my Redeemer,  
“ that he may sprinkle it with his at-  
“ toning Blood, that he may Cloath it  
“ with his justifying Righteousness, and  
“ make me (a vile Sinner) accepted in  
“ the Presence of a Just and Holy God:  
“ I appear, O Father, in the Presence  
“ of thy Justice and Holiness, clothed

“ in the Garments of thine own Son:  
 “ And I trust thou beholdest not Iniqui-  
 “ ty in me to punish it. I give my  
 “ Soul, that has much Corruption in it  
 “ by Nature, and much of the remain-  
 “ ing Power of Sin, into the Hands of  
 “ my Almighty Saviour, that by his  
 “ Grace he may form all my Powers a-  
 “ new; that he may subdue every irre-  
 “ gular Appetite, and root out every  
 “ disorderly Passion; that he may frame  
 “ me after his own Image, fill me with  
 “ his own Grace, and fit me for his own  
 “ Glory. I hope in thee my God, for  
 “ thou art my Refuge my Strength and  
 “ my Salvation; I love thee above all  
 “ Things; and I know I love thee.  
 “ Whom have I in Heaven but thee?  
 “ and there is none upon Earth that I  
 “ desire in Comparison of thee: I desire  
 “ thee with my strongest Affections, and  
 “ I delight in thee above all Delights:  
 “ My Soul stands in awe and fears be-  
 “ fore thee: And I rejoice to love such  
 “ a God who is Almighty, and the Ob-  
 “ ject of my highest Reverence.

4. *A Profession of our humble and holy  
 Resolutions to be the Lord's for ever.* This is  
 what is generally called a Vow. Now,  
 though I cannot encourage Christians  
 to bind themselves in particular Instan-

ces by frequently repeated Vows, and especially in Things that are in themselves indifferent; which oftentimes proves a dangerous Snare to Souls: yet we can never be too frequent, or too solemn in the general Surrender of our Souls to God, and binding our Souls by a Vow to be the Lord's for ever: To love him above all Things; to fear him, to hope in him, to walk in his ways, in a course of holy Obedience, and to wait for his Mercy unto Eternal Life. For such a Vow as this is, is included in the Nature of both the Ordinances of the Gospel, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Such a Vow as this is, is comprehended almost in every Act of Worship, and especially in solemn Addresses to God by Prayer. I might add,

In the last Place, that together with this Profession or Self-Dedication to God, 'tis necessary we should renounce every Thing that is inconsistent herewith, and that under each of the four preceding Heads: As, "I am thine, O Lord, and  
" I belong not to this World: I have  
" given my self to thee, and I have gi-  
" ven my self away from Sin and from  
" the Creature: I have renounced the  
" World as my Portion, and chosen the  
" Father. I have renounced all other  
" Saviours, and all my own Duties and  
C 5 "Righte-



“ Righteousnesses as the Foundation of  
“ my Interest in the favour of God, and  
“ chosen Christ Jesus, as my only way  
“ to the Father. I have renounced my  
“ own Strength as the ground of my  
“ Hope; for my Understanding is dark,  
“ my Will is impotent, and my best  
“ Affections are insufficient to carry me  
“ onwards to Heaven: I now again  
“ renounce Dependence upon all of them  
“ that I may receive greater Light and  
“ Strength and Love from God. I am  
“ dead to the Law, I am mortified to  
“ Sin, I am crucified to the World, and  
“ all by the Cross of Jesus my Saviour.  
“ I bid Satan get him behind me; I re-  
“ nounce him and his Ways and his  
“ Works; I will neither fear him nor  
“ love him; nor say a Confederacy  
“ with the Men of this World, for I  
“ love my God, for I fear my God, in  
“ my God is my Eternal Help and Hope:  
“ I will say What have I to do any more  
“ with Idols? and I will banish the Ob-  
“ jects of Temptation from my Sight.  
“ Thus I abandon every Thing that  
“ would divide me from God to whom  
“ I have made a Surrender of my self.  
“ And shouldest thou see fit to scourge  
“ and correct me, O my God, I submit  
“ to thine Hand; shouldst thou deny me  
“ the

“ the particular Requests I have present-  
“ ed to thee, I leave my self in thy  
“ Hands, trusting thou wilt chuse better  
“ for me. And because I know my  
“ own Frailty of Heart and the Incon-  
“ stancy of my Will, I humbly put all  
“ these my Vows and solemn Engage-  
“ ments into the Hands of my Lord Je-  
“ sus to fulfill them in me, and by me,  
“ through all the Days of my Infirmi-  
“ ty and this dangerous State of Trial.

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## S E C T. VII.

*Of Thanksgiving.*

**T**HE *Seventh* part of Prayer consists  
in *Thanksgiving*. To give Thanks  
is to acknowledge the Bounty of that  
Hand whence we receive our Blessings,  
and to ascribe Honour and Praise to the  
Power, the Wisdom and the Goodness  
of God upon that account. And this is  
part of that Tribute which God our  
King expects at our Hands for all the  
Favours we receive from him. It very  
ill becomes a Creature to partake of Be-  
nefits from his God, and then to forget  
his Heavenly Benefactor and grow re-  
gardless of that Bounty whence his Com-  
forts

forts flow. The matter of our Thanksgivings may be ranged under these two Heads; we must give Thanks for those Benefits for which we have prayed, and for those which God hath conferr'd upon us without praying for.

1. *Those Benefits which God hath bestowed on us without asking* are proper to be mentioned in the first Place, for they are the Effects of his rich and preventing Mercy: and how many are the Blessings of his Goodness with which he hath prevented us! "We praise thee, O Lord,  
 " for thine Original designs of Love  
 " to fallen Man; that thou shouldest  
 " make a Distinction between us and  
 " the Angels that sinned: What is Man  
 " that thou art thoughtful about his  
 " Salvation, and sufferest the Angels to  
 " perish for ever without remedy? That  
 " thou shouldst chuse a certain number  
 " of the Race of *Adam*, and give them  
 " into the hands of Christ before all  
 " Worlds, and make a Covenant of  
 " Grace with them in Christ Jesus that  
 " their Happiness might be secured?  
 " That thou shouldst reveal this Mercy  
 " in various Types and Promises to our  
 " Fathers by the Prophets, and that in  
 " thine own appointed time thou shouldst  
 " send thy Son to take our Nature upon  
 " him,

“ him, and to redeem us by his Death?  
“ We give Glory to thy Justice and to  
“ thy Grace for this work of Terror  
“ and Compassion, this work of Recon-  
“ ciling Sinners to thy self by the Pu-  
“ nishment of thy Son: We praise thee  
“ for the Gospel which thou hast pub-  
“ lished to the World, the Gospel of  
“ Pardon and Peace, and that thou hast  
“ confirm’d it by such abundant Testi-  
“ monies to raise and establish our Faith:  
“ We give Glory to that Power of thine  
“ that hast guarded thy Gospel in all  
“ Ages, and through ten thousand Op-  
“ positions of Satan hast delivered it  
“ down safe to our Age, and hast pro-  
“ claimed the glad Tidings of Peace in  
“ our Nation: We bless thee that thou  
“ hast built Habitations for thy self  
“ amongst us, and that we should be  
“ born in such a Land of Light as  
“ this is: ’Tis a distinguishing Fa-  
“ vour of Thine, that among the  
“ Works of thy Creation we should be  
“ placed in the Rank of rational Beings,  
“ but ’tis more distinguishing Goodness  
“ that we should be born of religious  
“ Parents under the general Promises of  
“ Grace. We give Thanks unto thy  
“ Goodness for our Preservation from  
“ many Dangers which we could never  
“ foresee,



“ foresee, and which we could not ask  
“ thee to prevent : How infinitely are  
“ we indebted to thee, O Lord, that  
“ thou hast not cut us off in a state of  
“ Nature and Sin, and that our Portion  
“ is not at this time amongst the Chil-  
“ dren of eternal Wrath ! That our  
“ Education should be under religious  
“ Care, and that we should have so  
“ many Conveniences and Comforts of  
“ Life conferr’d upon us, as well  
“ as the Means of Grace brought near  
“ to us, and all this before we began to  
“ know thee, or sought any of the Mer-  
“ cies of this Life or the other at thine  
“ Hands.

2. *We must give Thanks for the Benefits we have received as an Answer to Prayer.*  
Whatsoever Blessings we have sought at the Hands of God demand our Acknowledgments to his Goodness when we become Receivers : And here there is no need to enlarge in Particulars, for we may look back upon the fourth part of Prayer which consists in Petition, and there read the matter of our Thankfulness. There we learn to give Glory to God for our Deliverance from Evils Temporal and Spiritual, and our Hopes of Deliverance from the Evils that are Eternal ; for the Communication of  
Good

Sect. 7. *Thanksgiving.* 19

Good for Soul and Body, and our comfortable Expectation of the eternal Happiness of both; for Mercies bestowed on Churches, on Nations, on our Governors, on Relatives and our Friends as well as our selves. And we should rejoice in our Praises, and say to the Lord, " Verily thou art a God that hearest  
" Prayer, and thou hast not despised the  
" Cry of those that sought thee; we our  
" selves are Witnesses that thou dost not  
" bid thy People seek thy Face in vain.

All these our Thanksgivings may be yet further heightened in Prayer by the Consideration of the multitude of the Mercies that we have received; of their Greatness, and of their Continuance. By the mention of the Glory and Self-sufficiency of God the Giver, that he is happy in himself; and stands in no need of us, and yet he condescends to confer perpetual Benefits upon us; that he is Sovereign, and might dispose of his Favours to Thousands, and leave us out of the Number of his Favourites. That we are as vile and as unworthy as others, and that our God beholds all our Unworthiness, all our Guilt, our repeated Provocations, and his past Mercies abused, and yet he continues to have Mercy upon us, and waits to be Gracious.

SECT.

## S E C T. VIII.

## Of Blessing.

**THE** Eighth part of Prayer consists in Blessing of God, which hath a distinct Sense from Praise or Adoration, and is distinguished also from Thanksgiving. In *Psalm* cxlv. 10. 'tis said, *All thy Works Praise thee, and thy Saints Bless thee.* i. e. Even the inanimate Creation, which are the Works of God, manifest his Attributes and his Praises, but his Saints do something more, they Bless his Name; which part of Worship consists in these two Things,

1. In mentioning the several Attributes and Glories of God, with inward Joy, Satisfaction and Pleasure. "We delight, O Lord, to see thy Name Honoured in the World, and we rejoice in thy real Excellencies: We take Pleasure to see thee exalted above all: We triumph in the several Perfections of thy Nature, and we give Thanks at the Remembrance of thine Holiness: Thus we rejoice and bless the Lord for what he is in himself, as well as for what he has done for us; and this is a most Divine and unselfish act of Worship.
2. *Wishing the Glories of God may for ever continue,* and rejoicing in the Assurance

Assurance of it. " May the Name of  
 " God be for ever blessed: May the  
 " Kingdom and the Power and the Glory  
 " be for ever ascribed to him: May all  
 " Generations call him Honourable,  
 " and make his Name glorious in the  
 " Earth: To thee, O Father, Son and  
 " Holy Spirit, belong Everlasting Power  
 " and Honour.

## S E C T. IX.

*Amen, or the Conclusion.*

**W**E are taught in several places of  
 Scripture to conclude our Prayers  
 with *Amen*, which is a Hebrew word  
 that signifies *Truth*, or *Faithfulness*, *Cer-*  
*tainly*, *Surely*, &c. and it implies in it  
 these four things.

1. *A Belief of all that we have said con-*  
*cerning God and our selves*, of all our Ascrip-  
 tions of Honour to God in the mention  
 of his Name, and Attributes, and Works,  
 and a sensible inward Perswasion of our  
 own Unworthiness, our Wants, and our  
 Sorrows which we have before ex-  
 press'd.

2. *A wishing and desiring to obtain all*  
*that we have prayed for*, longing after  
 it.



it and looking for it. “ Lord, let it be  
 “ thus as we have said, is the Language  
 of this little word *Amen* in the end of  
 our Prayers.

3. *A confirmation of all our Professions,  
 Promises and Engagements to God:* It is  
 used as the form of the Oath of God in  
 some places of Scripture, *Verily or Sure-  
 ly* in Blessing I will Bless thee, *Heb. vi.*  
 13, 14. And it is as it were a solemn  
 Oath in our Lips, binding our selves to  
 the Lord according to the Professions  
 that we have made in the foregoing part  
 of Worship.

4. *It implies also the Hope and sure Ex-  
 pectation of the Acceptance of our Persons,  
 and Audience of our Prayers.* For while  
 we thus confirm our Dedication of our  
 selves to God, we also humbly lay claim  
 to his Accomplishment of the Promises  
 of his Covenant, and expect and wait  
 that he will fulfil all our Petitions so far  
 as they are agreeable to our truest In-  
 terest and the Designs of his own Glory.

CHAP.

## C H A P. II.

*Of the Gift of Prayer.*

HAVING already spoken of the Nature of Prayer, and distinguished it into its several Parts, I proceed to give some account of the Gift or Ability to pray.

This Holy Skill of speaking to God in Prayer, hath been usually called a *Gift*, and upon this account it hath been represented by the Weakness and Folly of some Persons like the Gift of Miracles or Prophecy, which are entirely the Effect of Divine Inspiration, wholly out of our reach, and unattainable by our utmost Endeavours. The Malice of others hath hereupon taken occasion to reproach all Pretences to it as vain Fancies and wild Enthusiasm. But I shall attempt to give so rational an Account of it in the following Sections, and lay down such plain Directions how to attain it with the Assistance of the holy Spirit, and his Blessing on our own Diligence and Labour, that I hope those Prejudices

lices will be taken off, and the unjust Reproach be wiped away for ever.

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## S E C T. I.

### *What the Gift of Prayer is.*

**T**HE Gift of Prayer may be thus described;

*It is an Ability to suit our Thoughts and Desires to all the various Parts and Designs of this Duty, and a readiness to express those Thoughts and Desires before God in the fittest manner to profit our own Souls and the Souls of others that join with us.*

It is called a Gift, partly because it was bestowed on the Apostles and Primitive Christians in an immediate and extraordinary manner by the Spirit of God; and partly because there is the ordinary Assistance of the Spirit of God required even in our Days to the attainment of this Holy Skill or Ability to Pray.

In the first Propagation of the Gospel it pleased the Spirit of God to bestow various Powers and Abilities on Believers, and these were called the *Gifts of the Spirit*, 1 Cor. xii. 4, 8, 9. Such were the Gifts of Preaching, of Exhortation, of Psalmody i. e. of making and singing of Psalms, of Healing the Sick, of speaking several Tongues, &c. Now though these

Sect. 1. *Gift of Prayer.* 45

these were given to Men at once in an extraordinary way then, and the Habits wrought in them by immediate divine Power made them capable of exerting the several Acts proper thereto on just Occasions, yet these Powers or Abilities of speaking several Tongues, of Psalmody, of Preaching and Healing are now to be obtained by human Diligence with due dependance on the concurring Blessing of God. And the same must be said concerning the Gift or Faculty of Prayer.

As the Art of Medicine or Healing is founded on the Knowledge of natural Principles, and made up of several Rules drawn from the Nature of things, from Reason and Observation; so the Art of Preaching is learnt and attain'd by the Knowledge of divine Principles, and the use of Rules and Directions for explaining and applying divine Truths; and so the Holy Skill of Prayer is built on a just Knowledge of God and our selves, and may be taught in as rational a Method by proper Directions and Rules. But because in a special Manner we expect the Aids of the Holy Spirit in things so serious and sacred, therefore the Faculties of Preaching and Praying are called the Gifts of the Spirit even to this Day, whereas



whereas that Word is not now-a-days apply'd to the Art of Medicine, or Skill in the Languages.

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S E C T. II.

*Of Forms of Prayer, Of Free, or Conceived Prayer, and Praying Extempore.*

**T**HE Gift of Prayer is one of the noblest and most useful in the Christian Life, and therefore to be sought with earnest Desire and Diligence; and in order to attain it, we must avoid these two *Extreams*.

I. A confining our selves entirely to precomposed Forms of Prayer.

II. An entire dependance on sudden Motions and Suggestions of Thought.

I. The *first Extream* to be avoided is, *a Confining our selves to set precomposed Forms of Prayer.*

I grant it lawful and convenient for weaker Christians to use a form in Prayer, rather than not perform that Duty at all. Christ himself seems to have indulged it to his Disciples in their Infant State of Christianity, *Luke. xi. 1, 2, &c.* I grant also that sometimes the most improved Saints

SECT. 2. *Forms of Prayer.* 47

Saints may find their own Wants and Desires, and the Frames of their own Hearts so happily expressed in the words of other Men, that they cannot find better, and may therefore in a very pious manner use the same: It is evident, that many Assistances may be borrow'd by Younger and Elder Christians from Forms of Prayer well-composed, without the use of the whole Form as a Prayer. And if I may have leave to speak the Language of a judicious Author that wrote more than forty Years ago, I would say with him, "That Forms may be useful and in some Causes necessary; for

1. "Some even amongst Christians and Professors, are so rude and ignorant, (tho' it may be spoken to their Shame) that they cannot tolerably express their Desires in Prayer; and must such utterly neglect the Duty? Is it not better, during their gross Ignorance, to use the help of others Gifts and Composures, than not to pray at all? Or to utter that which is senseless and impious? I speak it not, to excuse their Ignorance, or that they should be encouraged to rest satisfied herein, but for the present Necessity.

2. "Some

2. " Some again, tho' they can do it  
 " privately, and so far as may suffice in  
 " their secret Addresses to God ; yet  
 " when they are to pray before others,  
 " want either dexterity and fitness of  
 " Expression, readiness of Utterance, or  
 " confidence to use those Abilities they  
 " have (whom yet I will not excuse  
 " from a sinful Bashfulness.)

3. " It is possible, that some bodily  
 " Distemper, or sudden Distraction, may  
 " befall such as are otherwise able, which  
 " may becloud their Minds, weaken  
 " their Memories, and dull their Parts,  
 " that they may be unfit to express  
 " themselves in extemporary Concep-  
 " tions. This may happen in case of  
 " Melancholy, cold Palsies, or the like  
 " Distempers.

" I conclude then, that in the case  
 " aforesaid, or the like, a Form may be  
 " profitable and helpful. Nor is it a  
 " tying up the Spirit, but, if conscio-  
 " nably used, may be both attended with  
 " the Spirit's Assistance, and find Ac-  
 " ceptance with God. Yet it will not  
 " hence follow, that any should satisfy  
 " themselves in such stated and stinted  
 " Forms : Much less, that those who  
 " have praying Abilities, should be en-  
 " forced

Sect. 2. *Forms of Prayer.* 49

“ forced by others to rest in them. If  
 “ Ignorance, Bashfulness, Defect of Me-  
 “ mory, or other Distemper, may ren-  
 “ der it excusable and necessary to some,  
 “ is it fit all should rest in their measure?  
 “ Where then will be that coveting  
 “ earnestly the best Gifts? or why should  
 “ those who are excellently gifted that  
 “ way, be hindered from the use and  
 “ exercise of that Gift, because others  
 “ want it?

Thus far this worthy Writer. And  
 tho’ the use of Forms in such Cases be  
 not unlawful, yet a perpetual Confinement  
 to them will be attended with  
 such Inconveniencies as these.

1. *It much hinders the free Exercise of  
 our own Thoughts and Desires,* which is  
 the chief work and business of Prayer,  
 (viz.) to express our Desires to God; and  
 whereas our Thoughts and Affections  
 should direct our Words, a set Form of  
 Words directs our Thoughts and Affec-  
 tions; and while we bind our selves to  
 those Words only, we damp our inward  
 Devotion, and prevent the Holy Fire  
 from kindling within us; we discourage  
 our active Powers and Passions from run-  
 ning out on divine Subjects, and check  
 the breathings of our Souls heavenward.  
 The wise Man tells us, *Prov. xiv. 10.*

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The



50 *Forms of Prayer.* Chap. II.

*The Heart knows its own bitterness, and a Stranger intermeddles not with its Joy.* There are secret Joys and unknown Bitternesses which the Holy Soul longs to spread before God, and for which it cannot find any exact and correspondent Expressions in the best of Prayer-books: Now must such a Christian suppress all those Thoughts, and forbid himself all that sweet Conversation with his God, because it is not written down in the appointed Form?

2. The Thoughts and Affections of the Heart that are truly pious and sincere, are wrought in us by the Spirit of God, and if we deny them Utterance because they are not found in Prayer-books, *we run the danger of resisting the Holy Ghost, Quenching the Holy Spirit,* and fighting against the kind Designs of God towards us, which we are so expressly cautioned against, 1 *Thes.* v. 19. and which a humble Christian trembles to think of.

3. A Confinement to Forms *cramps and imprisons those Powers that God hath given us for Improvement and Use*; it silences our natural Abilities and forbids them to act, and it puts a Bar upon our spiritual Faculties, and prevents their Growth. To satisfy our selves with meer Forms, to confine our selves wholly

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formal

Sect. 2. *Forms of Prayer.* 51

ly to them, to restrain our own Desires and to neglect to stir up and improve our own Gifts is one kind of spiritual Sloth and highly to be disapproved. 'Tis hiding a Talent in the Earth which God hath given us on purpose to carry on a Trade with Heaven; 'tis an Abuse of our Knowledge of divine Things to neglect the use of it in our Converse with God: 'Tis as if a Man that had once used Crutches to support him when he was feeble would always use them; or because he has sometimes found his own Thoughts happily express'd in Conversation by another Person, therefore he will assent to what that other Person shall always speak, and never speak his own Thoughts himself.

4. *It leads us into the danger of Hypocrisie and meer Lip-Service:* Sometimes we shall be tempted to express those things which are not the very Thoughts of our own Souls, and so use words that are not suited to our present Wants, or Sorrows, or Requests; because those words are put together and made ready before-hand.

5. *The Confinement of our selves to a Form, tho' it is not always attended with Formality and Indifference, yet 'tis very apt to make our Spirits cold and flat, formal and indifferent in our Devotion:* The

frequent Repetition of the same Words doth not always awaken the same Affections in our Hearts which perhaps they were well suited to do when we first heard or made use of them. When we continually tread one constant Road of Sentences or track of Expressions, they become like an old beaten Path in which we daily travel, and we are ready to walk on without particular Notice of the several parts of the way; so in our daily Repetition of a Form, we neglect due Attention to the full Sense of the Words. But there is something more suited to awaken the attention of the Mind in a conceived Prayer; when a Christian is making his own way toward God according to the present Inclination of his Soul and urgency of his present Wants; and to use the words of a Writer lately cited, "While we are cloathing the Sense of our Hearts in fit Expressions, and as it were digging the matter of our Prayers out of our own Feelings and Experiences, it must needs keep the Heart closer at work."

6. The Duty of Prayer is very useful to discover to us the Frame of our own Spirits, but a constant use of Forms will much hinder our Knowledge of our selves and prevent our Acquaintance with our own Hearts,

*Hearts*, which is one great Spring of maintaining inward Religion in the Power of it. Daily Observation of our own Spirits would teach us what our Wants are, and how to frame our Prayers before God, but if we tye our selves down to the same Words always, our own Observation of our Hearts will be of little use, since we must speak the same Expressions let our Hearts be how they will. As therefore an inward search of our Souls and intimate Acquaintance with our selves is a means to obtain the Gift of Prayer, so the exercise of the Gift of Prayer will promote this Self-Acquaintance, which is discouraged and hindered by the restraint of Forms.

In the last Place, I mention the most usual, most evident and convincing Argument against perpetual Confinement of our selves to a Form, and that is, *Because it renders our Converse with God very imperfect, for it is not possible that Forms of Prayer should be composed, that are perfectly suited to all our Frames of Spirit, and fitted to all our Occasions in the things of this Life, and the Life to come. Our Circumstances are always altering in this frail and mutable State. We have new Sins to be confess'd, new Temptations and Sorrows to be represented,*



new Wants to be supply'd. Every change of Providence in the Affairs of a Nation, a Family, or a Person, requires suitable Petitions and Acknowledgments. And all these can never be well provided for in any prescribed Compositions. I confess all our Concerns of Soul and Body may be included in some large and general Words of a Form, which is no more suited to one Time, or Place, or Condition, than to another: But Generals are cold, and do not affect us, nor affect Persons that join with us, and whose case he that speaks in Prayer should represent before God. It is much sweeter to our own Souls, and to our Fellow-worshipper to have our Fears, and Doubts, and Complaints, and Temptations, and Sorrows, represented in most exact and particular Expressions, in such Language as the Soul it self feels when the words are spoken. Now, though we should often meet with Prayers precomposed, that are fitted to express our present Case, yet the Gift of Prayer is as much better than any Forms, as a general Skill in the Work of Preaching is to be preferr'd to any precomposed Sermons; as a perfect Knowledge in the Art of Physick, is better than any number of Receipts;

or

SECT. 2. *Forms of Prayer* 55

or as a Receipt to make a Medicine, is preferable to one single Medicine already made. But he that binds himself always to read printed Sermons will not arrive at the Art of Preaching: And that Man that deals only in Receipts, shall never become a skilful Physician, nor can the Gift of Prayer be attained by everlasting Confinement to Forms.

Perhaps it may make stronger Impressions on some Persons, and go further towards the Cure of their Confinement to Forms, and their Prejudices against the Gift of Prayer, to hear what a Bishop of the Church of *England* has said on this matter.

“ In the Use of such prescript Forms,  
 “ to which a Man hath been accustom-  
 “ ed, he ought to be narrowly watch-  
 “ ful over his own Heart, for fear of  
 “ that Lip-service and Formality, which  
 “ in such Cases we are more especially  
 “ exposed unto. — For any one so to  
 “ set down and satisfy himself with his  
 “ Book-prayer, or some prescript Form,  
 “ and to go no farther, this were still  
 “ to remain in his Infancy, and not to  
 “ grow up in his new Nature: This  
 “ would be, as if a Man, who had once  
 “ need of Crutches, should always af-  
 “ terwards make use of them, and so  
 “ D 4      “ necessi-

“ necessitate himself to a continual Im-  
 “ potency. — Prayer by Book; that  
 “ ’tis commonly of it self, something  
 “ flat and dead, floating for the most  
 “ part too much in Generalities, and  
 “ not particular enough for each sever-  
 “ al Occasion. There is not that Life  
 “ and Vigour in it, to engage the Af-  
 “ fections, as when it proceeds imme-  
 “ diately from the Soul it self, and is  
 “ the natural Expression of those parti-  
 “ culars whereof we are most sensible.  
 “ — ’Tis not easie to express what a  
 “ vast Difference a Man may find, in  
 “ respect of inward Comfort and Satis-  
 “ faction, betwixt those private Prayers  
 “ that are thus conceived from the Af-  
 “ fections, and those prescribed Forms  
 “ which we say by Rote, or read out  
 “ of Books. Bishop *Wilkins* in his *Gift*  
 “ of *Prayer*.

II. Another *Extream* to be avoided  
 by all that would obtain the Gift of  
 Prayer is, a *Neglect of Preparation for*  
*Prayer, and an entire Dependance on sud-*  
*den Motions and Suggestions*; as tho’ we  
 were to expect the perpetual Impression  
 of the holy Spirit upon our Minds, as  
 the Apostles and inspired Saints; as  
 tho’ we had reason to hope for his con-  
 tinual Impulses both in the Matter and  
 Manner,

Manner, and words of Prayer, without any Fore-thought, or Care, or Premeditation of our own. 'Tis true indeed; that when a Man hath premeditated the Matter of his Prayer, and the Method of it never so exactly, he ought not so to confine himself as to neglect or check any warm and pious Desires that may arise in his Heart in the midst of the Duty. But this doth not hinder, but that 'tis lawful and proper by all useful Means to endeavour in general to learn the holy Skill of Praying, and so prepare also by Meditation, or Reading, or holy Conversation, for the particular Exercise of this Gift, and the Performance of this Duty.

Some Persons imagine, that if they use no Form, they must always pray *Ex-tempore*, or without any Premeditation, and are ready to think all Free or conceived Prayer is Extemporary, but these Things ought to be distinguish'd.

*Conceiv'd or Free Prayer* is, when we have not the Words of our Prayer formed before-hand to direct our Thoughts, but we conceive the Matter or Substance of our Addresses to God first in our Minds, and then put those Conceptions into such Words and Expressions as we think most proper. And  
D 5 this



this may be done by some Work of Meditation before we begin to speak in Prayer; partly with regard to the Thoughts, and partly the Expressions too.

*Extemporary Prayer* is when we without any Reflexion or Meditation before-hand address our selves to God, and speak the Thoughts of our Hearts as fast as we conceive them. Now this is most properly done in that which is call'd *Ejaculatory Prayer*, when we lift up our Souls to God in short Breathings of Request or Thanksgiving, in the midst of any common Occasions of Life.

I grant indeed, that in secret Prayer there is not the same degree of Premeditation necessary as in publick: For there a Person takes greater Liberty to express his Thoughts, and the Desires of his Soul just as they arise within him, which may be very significant to awaken and maintain his own Affections in that Duty, tho' perhaps they would be very improper and disagreeable in publick.

I grant also, that Persons of better natural Parts, of a lively Temper, of ready Expression, of great Heavenly-mindedness, or such as have been long exercised

exercised and experienced in this Work, are not bound to an equal degree of Premeditation as others. Bishop *Wilkins* very pertinently tells us, "The Pro-  
" portion of Gifts that a Man hath re-  
" ceiv'd is the Measure of his Work  
" and Duty in this Case.

I grant further, That there may be several Calls of Providence which may demand such sudden Addresses to God even from Persons of less Skill and Experience, and they have then Reason to hope for more special Assistance from the Spirit of God while they obey the Call of Duty.

But for younger Christians, unskill'd in this Work, to rush thus into the Presence of God in solemn Prayer without due Fore-thought, when there is time allow'd for it, is no Sign of that due Reverence which they owe to his Majesty, and will be an effectual Bar against their attaining the Gift of Prayer.

Besides, if we utterly neglect Preparation, we shall be ready to fall into many Inconveniences. Sometimes we shall be driven to make long and indecent Stops in Prayer, not knowing what to say next; sometimes we shall be in dan-

danger of saying those things that are very little to the purpose, and of wandering far from our proposed Subject and Design, which can never be acceptable to a God of awful Majesty, and jealous of his Worship. And sometimes when the Mind is not regularly furnished, the natural Spirits are put into a hurry, and we run into a confused incoherent and impertinent Rhapsody of Words, whereby both God may be dishonoured, and our own Edification and the Edification of others spoiled; while the Spirit of God stands afar off from us for a Season, it may be, on purpose to reprove our Negligence of a wise and holy Care to learn to pray.

Some such unhappy Practices as these in the last Age have given great Offence to the Pious, and been a Stumbling-block and Scandal to the Profane. The wicked and profane World have taken Occasion from hence to throw loads of Reproach on all *conceived* Prayer, under the Name of Praying *extempore*, and have endeavoured to render all Prayer without Books and Forms as odious as possible under this Name. The more sober and pious Part of the Church of *England*, that usually wor-  
ship,

Sect. 2. *Premeditation:* 61

ship God by Liturgies and precomposed Forms have been too ready to give ear to these Reproaches, and have by this means been confirmed in their Confinement to Liturgies and Prayer-Books; they have been hardened hereby against attempting to seek the Gift of Prayer themselves, and been tempted to oppose and censure those that have attained it. No small share of this publick Scandal will be found at the Door of those few bold ignorant and careless Men, who have been guilty of such rash and thoughtless Addresses to God under a pretence of Praying by the Spirit.

Having thus endeavoured to secure you from these two dangerous Extreams, I proceed,

In the Gift of Prayer we are to consider these five Things: *The Matter, the Method, the Expression, the Voice, and the Gesture.* I shall treat of each of these at large.

SECT.



## S E C T. III.

*Of the Matter of Prayer.*

**FIRST**, 'Tis necessary to furnish our selves with proper Matter, that we may be able to hold much Converse with God; to entertain our own Souls and others agreeably and devoutly in Worship; to assist the Exercise of our own Graces and others by a rich Supply of Divine Thoughts and Desires in Prayer; that we may not be forced to make too long and indecent Pauses, whilst we are performing that Duty; nor break off abruptly as soon as we have begun, for want of Matter; nor pour out abundance of Words to dress up narrow and scanty Sense for want of a variety of devout Thoughts.

I shall therefore *First* propose some *Rules* in order to furnish our selves with proper Matter for Prayer, and *then* lay down some Directions concerning these Materials of Prayer with which our Souls are furnished.

*Rules* to furnish us with Matter are these,

1. *Labour after a large Acquaintance with all Things that belong to Religion; for*  
there

there is nothing that relates to Religion but may properly make some part of the Matter of our Prayer. This is therefore the most general Advice, and the most universal Rule that can be given in this Case; let us daily seek after a more extensive and a more affecting Knowledge of God and of our selves: A great Acquaintance with God in his Nature, in his Persons, in his Perfections, in his Works, and in his Word will supply us with abundant Furniture for Invocation, Adoration, and Praise, for Thanksgiving and Blessing; and will suggest to us many Arguments in pleading with God for Mercy. An intimate Acquaintance with our selves, and a lively Sense of our own Frames of Spirit, our Wants, our Sorrows and our Joys, will also supply us with proper Thoughts for Confession, for Petition and for Giving Thanks. We should acquaint our selves therefore with the Word of God in a great degree, for 'tis there he reveals himself to us, and there he discovers us also to our selves. Let the Word of Christ dwell richly in you in all Wisdom, that you may be furnish'd with Petitions and Praises.

We should also be watchful Observers of the Dealings of God with us in every

64 *Matter of Prayer.* Chap. II.

every Ordinance and in every Providence, and know well the State of our own Souls. We should observe the working of our Hearts towards God, or towards the Creature, and call our selves to account often, and often examine our Temper and our Life, both in our natural, our civil and religious Actions. For this purpose as well as upon many other Accounts, it will be of great Advantage to keep by us in writing some of the most remarkable Providences of God, and Instances of his Anger or Mercy towards us, and some of our most remarkable Carriages towards him, whether Sins, or Duties, or the Exercises of Grace. Such Observations and Remarks in our daily walking with God, will be a growing Treasury to furnish us for Petition and Praise; this seems to be the meaning of those Scriptures where we read, of *watching unto Prayer*, *Ephes. vi. 18.* and *1. Pet. iv. 7.* This will make us always ready to say something to God in Prayer, both concerning him, and concerning our selves. Let our Judgments be constantly well stored, and our Graces and our Affections be lively, and lead us to the Duty, and for the most part some proper Matter will naturally

Sect. 3. *Matter of Prayer.* 69

naturally arise and flow with Ease and Pleasure.

2. *Let the Nature of this Duty of Prayer as divided into its several Parts be impressed upon your Hearts and dwell in your Memories.* Let us always remember that it contains in it these several parts of Worship namely Invocation, Adoration, Confession, Petition, Pleading, Profession or Self-resignation, Thanksgiving and Blessing, which that we may retain the better in our Minds may be sum'd up in these four Lines;

*Call upon God, Adore, Confess,  
Petition, Plead, and then Declare  
You are the Lord's, give Thanks and Bless,  
And let Amen confirm the Prayer.*

And by a Recollection of these several parts of Prayer, we may be assisted to go on Step by Step, and to improve in the Gift or Performance of this part of Worship.

It would tend also to improve the Gift of Prayer, if such Persons as have Time and Capacity would set down all these parts of Prayer as common Places, and all the observable Passages that occur in reading the Holy Scripture, or other Authors, for such Passages as we hear



hear deliver'd in Prayer that are very affecting to our Souls, should be written down and register'd under those Heads. This would preserve such Thoughts and Expressions in our Memories, which have had a peculiar quickning Influence upon us. Bishop *Wilkins* in his Treatise of Prayer has given us such Collections of Scripture, and Mr. *Henry* in a late Book has furnished us with a great many more, and judiciously rang'd under their proper Subjects.

3. *Do not content your selves merely with Generals*, but if you would be furnish'd with larger Supplies of Matter, *descend to Particulars* in your Confessions, Petitions and Thanksgivings. Enter into a particular Consideration of the Attributes, the Glories, the Graces, and the Relations of God: Express your Sins, your Wants, and your Sorrows with a particular Sense of the mournful Circumstances that attend them; it will enlarge your Hearts in Prayer and Humiliation, if you confess the Aggravations that encrease the Guilt of your Sins, (*viz.*) whether they have been committed against Knowledge, against the Warnings of Conscience, &c. It will furnish you with large Matter for Thankfulness,

fulness, if you run over the exalting and heightening Circumstances of your Mercies and Comforts, (*viz.*) That they are great, and spiritual, and eternal, as well as temporal: That they were granted before you sought them, or as soon as ask'd, &c. And let your Petitions and your Thanksgivings in a special Manner be suited to the Place and Circumstances of your selves, and those that you pray with, and those that you pray for.

Our Burdens, our Cares, our Wants, and Sins are many; so are our Mercies also and our Hopes, so are the Attributes of our God, his Promises and his Graces; if we open our Mouths wide, he will fill and satisfie us with good Things according to his Word. If Generals were sufficient for us, one very short Form would make all others needless; it would be enough to express our selves in this Manner to God. "O Lord thou art Great and Good, but we are vile Sinners, give us all the Mercies we stand in need of for Time and for Eternity for the sake of Jesus Christ, and through him accept all our Thanksgivings for whatsoever we have and hope for: To the Father,

68 *Matter of Prayer.* Chap. II.

“ Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be eternal Glory. *Amen.*”

This is a most general and comprehensive Prayer, and includes in it every thing necessary: But there is no Christian can satisfy his Soul to go from Day to Day to the Mercy-Seat and say nothing else to God but this. A Saint in a right frame loves to pour out his Soul before God in a hundred Particulars; and God expects to see his Children sensibly affected with their own special Wants, and his peculiar Mercies, and to take Notice of the lesser as well as of the more considerable Circumstances of them. Let us not be straitned in our selves then, for the Hand of God and his Heart are not straitned. Our Lord Jesus bids us *ask*, and promises *it shall be given*, Matt. vii. 7. The Apostle Paul bids us *in every thing by Prayer and Supplication to make known our Requests to God*, Phil. iv. 6. And the Apostle James tells us *we receive not because we ask not*, Jam. iv. 2.

4. In order to furnish our Minds with matter for Prayer, 'tis very convenient at solemn Seasons of worship to read some part of the Word of God, or some spiritual Treatise written by Holy Men, or to converse with Fellow-Christians about Divine

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Sect. 3. *Matter of Prayer.* 69

vine things, or to spend some time in Recollection and Meditation of things that belong to Religion. This will not only supply us with Divine Matter but will compose our Thoughts to a Solemnity: Just before we engage in that Work we should be absent a little from the World that our Spirits may be freer for converse with God. We may borrow matter for Prayer from the Word which we read, from inward Reflections of our own Souls as well as from Holy Conferences; and many a Saint hath found this true, that *while he mused the Fire burnt within him; Psalm xxxix. 3.* and while we speak to Men about the Affairs of Religion and inward Piety, we shall certainly find something to say to God.

5. If we find our Hearts after all very barren, and hardly know how to form a Prayer before God of our selves, it has been oftentimes *useful to take a Book in our Hand, wherein are contained some Spiritual Meditations, devout Reflections or excellent Patterns of Prayer*, and above all the Psalms of David, some of the Prophecies of Isaiah, some Chapters in the Gospels, or any of the Epistles. Thus we may lift up our Hearts to God in secret, in short Requests, Adorations or Thanksgivings



according as the Verses or Paragraphs we read are suited to the Case of our own Souls.

This many Christians have experienced as a very agreeable help, and of great Advantage in their secret Retirements; that when they could not of themselves speak a Prayer to God, they could yet interline what they read with Holy Breathings toward God, with fervent Petitions; and by this Means they have found their Souls warmed, and oftentimes in the sight of God have performed this Duty more agreeably in this method than other Persons of a larger and more extensive Gift with great Furniture of Matter and much fluency of Language. Nor can I disapprove of what Bp. *Wilkins* says concerning secret Prayer, (*viz.*) "That 'tis not  
 " always necessary here that a Man should  
 " still keep on in a continued frame of  
 " Speech; But in private Devotions a  
 " Man may take a greater freedom both  
 " for his Phrase and Matter: He may  
 " sometimes be at a stand and make a  
 " pause, there may be Intermissions and  
 " blank Spaces in respect of Speech,  
 " wherein by Meditation he may re-  
 " cover new matter to continue in this  
 " Duty.

Sect. 3. *Matter of Prayer.* 71

6. If you find your Heart so very dry and unaffected with the things of Religion, that you can say nothing at all to God in Prayer, that you have no divine Matter occurs to your Thoughts, go and fall down humbly before God, and tell him with a grievous Complaint, that you can say nothing to him, that you can do nothing but Groan and Cry before him; go and tell him, that without his Spirit you cannot speak one Expression, that without immediate Assistances from his Grace you cannot proceed in this Worship; that he must lose a Morning or an Evening Sacrifice, if he condescend not to send down Fire from Heaven upon the Altar. Plead with him earnestly for his own Spirit if it be but in the Language of Sighs and Tears; beg that he would never suffer your Heart to be so hard, nor your Soul to be so empty of Divine things; that he would not only now but at all times furnish you for so glorious a Work as this of Converse with himself; and God knows the Mind of his own Spirit, and he hears those Groanings that cannot be uttered, and he understands their Language when the Soul is as it were imprison'd and shut up that it cannot vent it self; our heavenly Father bears the Groans of the Prisoner;  
*Psal.*

*Psal.* cii. 20. And there hath been glorious Communion maintained with God before the end of that Season of Worship, when at the beginning of it the Saint could say nothing else but *Lord I cannot pray.*

Let it be noted here, that when there is such a heaviness and deadness upon the Spirit, such a coldness or distraction in this Worship, and such an averfeness and reluctance in the Mind, it ought to be a matter of Humiliation and deep Self-Abasement before God; especially when at any time we are sensible that 'tis owing to our Negligence, or to some late Guilt brought upon the Conscience. Earnestly we should beg Pardon for it, and Power against it, and as Bp. *Wilkins* says,  
 "What we want in the Degrees of our  
 "Duty, we should be sure to make up  
 "in Humility, and this will be the most  
 "proper Improvement of our Failings  
 "when we can strengthen our selves by  
 "our very Infirmities.

I proceed now to lay down some Directions concerning the *Matter* of our Prayers.

1. *Do not think it absolutely necessary to insist upon all the parts of Prayer in every Address to God; though in our stated and Solemn Prayers there are but few of them that*

Sect. 3. *Matter of Prayer.* 73

that can be well left out. What we omit at one time we may perhaps pursue at another with more lively Affection, that so we may fulfil all our Errands at the Throne of Grace.

But let us be sure to insist most upon those things which are warmest on our own Hearts, especially in secret; and this is a good Advice even in social Prayers, when those things which we are deeply affected with, are such as the Company that joyns with us may properly be concern'd in too. Also let those parts of Prayer have the largest share in the performance for which our Spirit is best prepared, and with which it is most sensibly impress'd at the present Season; whether it be Adoration, Petition, Confession or Thanksgiving. This will not only furnish us with Matter, but will keep our Spirits lively in the Work, and will be the best means to affect those that joyn with us, and to call their Graces into Exercise. Those things indeed which our Fellow-Worshipers cannot be concern'd in, are better laid aside till we come to speak to God alone.

2. *Suit the Matter of your Prayer to the special Occasion of each particular Duty, to the Circumstances of the Time, Place, and Persons, with, and for whom*  
E you



you pray. This will be another Spring of Matter, and will direct you to the choice of proper Thoughts and Language for every part of Prayer.

(1) *The Time.* If it be Morning, then we adore God as the watchful Shepherd of *Israel* that slumbers not nor sleeps. Then we confess our Inability to have defended ourselves through all the Hours of Darkness, while Nature and our active Powers lye as it were useless and dead: Then we give Thanks to him that he hath secured us from the Spirits of Darkness, and given us Rest in measure and raised us in Peace; *I laid me down and slept with Comfort, I awoke for the Lord sustained me, Ps. iii. 5.* Then we petition for Divine Counsel in all the Affairs of the Day, and the Presence of God with us through all the Cares, Businesses, Dangers and Duties of it.

In the Evening we give Thanks to God for the Mercies of the Day for which we offered our Petitions in the Morning: We confess the Sins and Follies of the Day, and humble our Souls before God; we petition for proper Mercies the succeeding Night; with Expressions of Adoration, Confession and Self-resignation suited to the time, *Ps. iv. 8. I will lye down in Peace, O Lord, and sleep;*

**Sect. 3. Matter of Prayer.** 75

*sleep; for thou alone makest me to dwell in Safety.*

Thus when we pray before or after Meat: thus on the Lord's Day, or our common Days of Business; in a time of War or Peace; a Season of Publick or Private rejoycing; a Day of Trouble and Humiliation: let the several Expressions of our Prayer in the various Parts of it be suited to the particular Season.

(2) *The Place and the Persons.* If in our secret Retirements, then we adore God in this Language, "O Lord God who seest in secret, who knowest the way that I take, thou hast commanded that thy Children should seek thee in their Closets, and thou hast promised to reward them openly; here also we ought to confess our more particular Sins which the World knows not, and pour out our whole Souls before God with great Freedom and Plainness: Tell him all our Follies, our Infirmities, our Joys and Sorrows; our brightest Hopes and our most gloomy and dismal Fears, and all the inward workings of our Hearts, either towards himself or towards the Creatures. Then we converse with God aright in Prayer when we as it were maintain a divine Friendship with him in Secret, and in our humble Addresses hold Cor-

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76 *Matter of Prayer.* Chap. II.

correspondence with him as our Heavenly and condescending Friend.

When we pray in a Family, the Matter must be suited to the Circumstances of the Household, in Confession of Family Sins, Petitions and Thanksgivings for Family Mercies; whether those with whom we live are Sick or in Health, whether they are in Distress or in Peace, whether fix'd in their Habitations or removing, and our Language to God ought to be suited to this variety of Conditions.

If we pray among a select Society of Christians, we draw near unto God with holy Boldness, something like what we use in our Duties of secret Worship; we have reason to take more Freedom among those that are Fellow-Saints, and whose Hearts have felt many of the same Workings with our own; then when our Faith is lively we should give Thanks to God for our Election in Christ Jesus, for the Attonement and Righteousness of the Son of God in which we humbly hope we have an Interest; for the enlightning and sanctifying Work of his own Spirit upon our Hearts, for our Expectations of eternal Glory: And by expressing the Joys of our Faith to God, we may often be  
made

Sect. 3. *Matter of Prayer.* 77

made a Means in the Hands of the Holy Spirit to raise the Faith and Joy of others.

In publick Worship, or Family Devotions, where Saints and Sinners are present, a Minister, or a Christian that speaks in Prayer, should consider the Circumstances of the whole Congregation, or Family, and plead for suitable Mercies. But I think he should not be ashamed to express his Faith and Hope when he speaks to God, where there are many to join with him in that holy Language, tho' every single Hearer cannot heartily join and consent. Perhaps this may be a way to make unconverted Persons that are present blush and be ashamed, and be inwardly griev'd that they are forc'd to leave out many of the Expressions of Prayer used by the Minister, and are convinc'd in themselves and confounded because they cannot join in the same Language of Faith and Hope, Joy and Thankfulness. For it is not necessary that every Worshipper should lift up his Soul to God according to every Sentence spoken in social Prayer, but only in such as are suited to his own Case and State, and such as he can sincerely speak to God himself.



3. *Do not affect to pray long for the sake of length,* or to stretch out your Matter by Labour and Toil of Thought beyond the Furniture of your own Spirit. God is not the more pleas'd with Prayers merely because they are long, nor are Christians ever the more edified. I confess when we feel our Spirits dry, and our Hearts freightned, we may cry to God for the Aids of his own Holy Spirit even in the middle of our Prayer to carry us on forward in that Work: But every Man is not fit to pray long. God has bestowed a Variety of natural as well as spiritual Talents and Gifts upon Men; nor is the best Christian, or a Saint of the greatest Gifts, always fit for long Prayers; for hereby he may fall into many Inconveniences.

The Inconveniences of *affected length* in Prayer are these.

(1.) Sometimes a Person is betrayed by an Affectation of long Prayers into *crude, rash and unseemly Expressions* in the Presence of God, such as are unworthy of his Divine Majesty, and unbecoming our Meanness: Sometimes he is forc'd into impertinent Digressions, and wanders away from the Subject in hand till his Thoughts again recover themselves: And true spiritual Worship is hereby hindred

Se&. 3. *Matter of Prayer.* 79

hundred and corrupted. We should rather therefore take the Advice of Solomon upon this Account, *Eccles. v. 1. Be not rash to utter any thing before God, God is in Heaven and thou upon Earth, therefore let thy words be few.*

(2.) We are tempted hereby to *Tautologies*, to say the same Things over and over again, which our Saviour highly blames, *Matt. vi. 7. When ye pray use not vain repetitions as the Heathens do, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking.* Sometimes indeed in the midst of our warm Affections in Prayer, we are delightfully constrain'd to a Repetition of the same Words through meer fervency of Spirit; and there are Instances of it in Scripture: But for the most part our Repetitions are such as evidence not the Fervency, but the Barrenness of our Minds and the Slightness of our Frame.

(3.) Again we shall be in danger, thro' an Affectation of length, of tiring those that join with us; especially when a Prayer is drawn out to many Words with much dulness and deadness of Spirit, and without an agreeable variety of Thought. I confess when the Spirit is poured out in plentiful Degrees upon Men, and upon some extraordinary Occasions Pet-

sons have continu'd in Prayer for an Hour or two together with a delightful variety of Matter and Expression, and instead of Toil and Labour to hold on they found it difficult to break off; their Souls have been all the while near to God, and they have held the Attention of those that join with them and kept their Devotion warm. Our Fathers have seen and felt it; but that Spirit is much departed in our Day; and there are seldom found amongst us any great lengths of Prayer with equal Affection and Devotion maintained either in our selves or others through so long a Duty.

(4.) We are tempted also sometimes by this Means *to exceed the Season that is allotted for us in Prayer*, especially where others are to succeed in the same Work; or else we entrench it may be upon other parts of Worship that are to follow; hereby some of our Fellow-worshippers are made uneasie; and when Persons are under a necessary Engagement to be elsewhere by an appointed time, or to be engag'd in other Duties, the latter part of their Devotion is generally spoiled. It may be remarked here, that even when *Jacob* wrestled with the Angel he was required to let

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**Sect. 3. Matter of Prayer. 81**

*him go for it is break of day, Gen. xxxii. 26.*  
As we must not make one Duty to thrust out another, so neither should we manage any Duty so as to make it a hard Task to our selves, or a Toil to others, but a Pleasure and spiritual Entertainment to both.

(5.) I might add in the last Place, that by this excessive Affectation of length in Prayer without an equal degree of the Spirit of Prayer and lively Devotion, some imprudent Christians have given too much Occasion to the prophane Scoffers of the Age, and hereby the wicked of the Earth have render'd these Methods of Converse with God ridiculous among their own Company, and have exposed and reproached the Gift and Spirit of Prayer, because of our irregular Performance of that part of Worship: Whereas when the Spirit of God by his own immediate and uncommon Influences draws out the Heart to continue in Prayer these Inconveniencies will not follow.

**ES SECT.**



## S E C T. IV.

*Of the Method of Prayer.*

**I** Proceed now to the *Second* Thing to be consider'd in the Gift of Prayer, and that is, *Method*.

*Method is necessary to guide our Thoughts, to regulate our Expressions, and dispose of the several parts of Prayer in such an Order as is most easie to be understood by those that join with us, and most proper to excite and maintain our own Devotion and theirs.* Though there is not a necessity of the same just and exact Regularity here as in preaching the Word, yet a well regulated Prayer is most agreeable to Men, honourable in the sight of the World, and not at all the less pleasing to God. The Spirit of God when he is poured out as a Spirit of Prayer in the most glorious Measures doth not contradict the Rules of a natural and reasonable Method, although his Methods may have infinite variety in them.

Some *Method* must be us'd in order to secure us from Confusion, that our Thoughts may not be ill sorted or mingled and huddled together in a tumultuary and unseemly manner. This will

Sect. 4. *Method of Prayer.* 83

will be of use also to prevent Tautologies or Repetitions of the same thing, when each part of Prayer is dispos'd into its proper place: This will guard us against roving Digressions when we have rang'd our Thoughts into Order throughout every step of our Prayer: Our Judgment infers what sort of Matter properly and naturally follows that which we are at present speaking: So that there is no need to fill up any empty Spaces with Matter that is not proper or not suited to the Purpose. Those Persons that profess to pray without observing any Method at all, if they are very acceptable and affecting to others in their Gift, do certainly use a secret and a natural Method and proper Connections of one thing with another, tho' they themselves have not laid down any Rule to themselves for it, nor take notice of the Order of their own Prayers.

The general *Rules of Method* in Prayer which I would recommend to you are these Three.

1. *Let the General and the Particular Heads in Prayer be well distinguished, and usually let Generals be mentioned first, and Particulars follow:* As for Example: In *Adoration* we acknowledge, that God is all over glorious in his Nature, Self-sufficient

## 84 *Method of Prayer.* Chap. II.

sufficient and All-sufficient, and we mention this with the deepest Reverence, and universal Abasement of Soul; and then we descend to praise him for his particular Attributes of Power, Wisdom, Goodness, &c. and exercise our particular Graces accordingly. So in *Confession*, we first acknowledge our selves vile Sinners, corrupt by Nature, and of the same sinful Mass with the rest of Mankind, and then we confess our particular Iniquities, and our special Guilt. So in our *Petitions*, we pray first for the Churches of Christ all over the World, and his Interest, and his Gospel throughout the Earth, and then we petition for the Churches in this Nation, in this City, or that particular Church of Christ to which we belong.

Sometimes indeed there is a Beauty also in summing up all the Particulars at last in one General; as when we have praised God for his several Perfections to the utmost of our Capacity, we cry out, "Lord thou art exalted above all our Praises; thou art altogether great and glorious. Or when we have confessed several particular Sins, we fall down before God, as Persons that are all over defiled and guilty. When we have petitioned for particular Mercies,

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Sect. 4. *Method of Prayer.* 85

we then ask that God who is able to do for us above what we can ask or think, that he would bestow all other Comforts, and every Blessing that he knows needful for us. But still this Rule must be observed, that general and particular Heads ought to be so distinguished, as to make our *Method of Prayer* natural and agreeable.

2. *Let things of the same kind for the most part be put together in Prayer.* We should not run from one part to another by Starts and sudden wild Thoughts, and then return often to the same part again, going backward and forward in Confusion: This bewilders the Mind of him that prays, disgusts our Fellow-worshippers, and injures their Devotion: This will lead us into vain Repetitions, and we shall lose our selves in the Work.

Yet I would give this Limitation, that sometimes the same Matter may come in naturally, under two or three Parts of Prayer, and be properly disposed of in two or three places by a judicious Worshipper. As the mention of some of the Attributes of God under the Head of *Adoration*, where we praise him for his own Perfections: And under the head of *Pleading* for Mercy, when



## 86 *Method of Prayer.* Chap. II.

when we use his Power, his Wisdom, or his Goodness, as an Argument to enforce our Petitions; and under the Head of *Thanksgiving* also, when we bless him for the Benefits that proceed from his Goodness, his Power, or his Wisdom: So in the Beginning of a Prayer in our *Invocation* of God, we put in a Sentence or two of *Confession* of our Unworthiness, and of *Petition* for divine Assistance: So towards the Conclusion of Prayer, it is not amiss to use a Sentence or two, consisting of such Matter as may leave a suitable Impression upon our Minds, though perhaps something of the same Matter may have been beforementioned: As to ask Forgiveness of all the Imperfections of our holy Things: To intreat that God would hear all our Requests in the Name of our Lord *Jesus*: To recommend our Prayers into the Hands of our Redeemer, our great High Priest, and to commit our whole selves to the Conduct of divine Grace, 'till we are brought safe to Glory. But then all this must be done with such a Variety of Expression, and with such proper Connections, as will render it agreeable in its self, and will entertain the Minds of those that join with us, and give them

Sect. 4. *Method of Prayer.* 87

them Delight rather than hinder their Devotion.

3. *Let those things in every part of Prayer which are the proper Objects of our Judgment be first mentioned, and then those that influence and move our Affections;* not that we should follow such a manner of Prayer as is more like Preaching, as some imprudently have done, speaking many divine Truths without the Form or Air of Praying: It is a very improper Custom which some Persons have taken up and indulged, when divine Truths come to be mentioned in Prayer, they run great Lengths in a doctrinal Way; yet there is occasion frequently in Prayer, under the several Parts of it, for the recollecting of divine Truths, and these lay a proper Foundation for warm and pathetical Expressions to follow. As, "O Lord, thou art good, and thou do'st good, why should I continue so long without partaking thy Goodness? My Sins are great, and my Iniquities have many Aggravations, O that I might mourn for them before thee in secret! O that I could pour out my Soul before thee in Sorrow, because of multiplied Offences! Thus let the Language of Affection follow the Language of our Judg-

## 88 *Method of Prayer.* Chap. II.

Judgment, for this is the most rational and natural Method.

Having laid down these general Rules, the best particular *Method* I can direct you to is, that Division of the Parts of Prayer mentioned in the foregoing Chapter. I know not a more natural Order of things than this is. To begin with *Invocation*, or calling upon God; then proceed to *Adore* that God whom we invoke, because of his various Glories; we are then naturally led to the work of *Confession*, considering what little contemptible Creatures we are in the Presence of so adorable a God, and to humble our selves because of our abounding Sins and our many Necessities: When we have given Praise to a God of such Holiness, and having spread our Wants before God, *Petitions* for Mercy naturally follow, and *pleading* with such divine Arguments as the Spirit and the word of God put into our Mouths should accompany our Requests; after all we *resign* our selves into the Hands of God, and express our Self-dedication to him; then we recollect the Mercies that we have received, and out of Gratitude pay him our Tribute of Honour and *Thanks*: And as he is glorious in himself, and glorious in his Works

Sect. 4. *Method of Prayer.* 89

Works of Power and Grace, so we bless him, and ascribe everlasting Glory to him.

I cannot but think it a very useful thing for young Beginners, in the work of Prayer, to remember all these Heads in their Order, to dispose of their Thoughts and Desires before God in this Method, proceeding regularly from one part to another. And as this must needs be useful to assist and teach us to pray in publick, so sometimes in our secret Retirements it may not be improper to pursue the same Practice.

Yet it must be granted, there is no Necessity of confining our selves to this, or to any other set Method, no more than there is of confining our selves to a Form in Prayer.

Sometimes the Mind is so divinely full of one particular Part of Prayer; perhaps of *Thanksgiving*, or of *Self-resignation*, that high Expressions of Gratitude and of devoting our selves to God break out first.

“ Lord I am come to devote my self  
“ to thee in an everlasting Covenant,  
“ I am thine through thy Grace, and  
“ through thy Grace I will be thine  
“ for ever: Or thus, “ Blessed be thy  
“ Name, O Lord God Almighty, for  
“ thine



“ thine abundant Benefits, that fill my  
 “ Soul with the Sense of them, for  
 “ thou hast pardoned all my Iniquities,  
 “ and healed all my Diseases.

Sometimes even in the beginning of a Prayer, when we are insisting on one of the first Parts of it, we receive a divine Hint from the Spirit of God, that carries away our Thoughts and our whole Souls with warm Affection into another part that is of a very different Kind, and that usually perhaps comes in near the Conclusion: And when the Spirit of God thus leads us, and our Souls are in a very devout Frame, we are not to quench the Spirit of God, in order to tye our selves to any set Rules of prescribed Method.

There is no necessity that Persons of great Talents, of divine Affections, of much Converse with God, and that have attained to a good Degree of this Gift by long Exercise, should bind themselves to any one certain *Method* of Prayer. For we find the Prayers recorded in Holy Scripture are very various in the Order and Disposition of them, as the Spirit of God and the divine Affections of those Saints led and guided them: But still there is some Method observed, and may be traced and demonstrated.

Sect. 5. *Expression in Prayer.* 91

I am perswaded, that if young Christians did not give themselves up in their first Essays of Prayer to a loose and negligent Habit of speaking every thing that comes uppermost, but attempted to learn this holy Skill, by a Recollection of the several parts of Prayer, and disposing their Thoughts into this *Method*, there would be great Numbers in our Churches that would have arrived at a good Degree of the Gift of Prayer, and be capable afterwards of giving a more glorious and unbounded loose to their Souls, without breaking the Rules of just and natural Method, and that to the great Edification of our Churches, as well as of their own Families.

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S E C T. V.

*Of Expression in Prayer.*

III. **T**HE *Third* Thing that relates to the Gift of Prayer is *Expression*.

Though Prayer be the proper Work of the Heart, yet in this present State, in secret as well as in social Prayer, the Language of the Lips is an excellent  
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92 *Expression in Prayer.* Chap. II.

Aid in this part of Worship. A Person indeed may pray heartily and effectually and yet make use of no Words: Sometimes the Desires of the Heart may be too big to be expressed when the Spirit of God is with us in plentiful Operations, and assists us to plead with Sighs and Groans *which cannot be uttered*, as Romans viii. 26. Persons that are dumb may think over their Wants, and raise their Souls to God in longing desires and wishes for Grace in a time of need: Nor is there any Necessity of using Language upon God's account, for he knows the Desires of our Hearts, and our most secret Breathings towards him. He that hears without Ears, understands us without our Words. Yet as Language is of absolute Necessity in social Prayer, that others may join with us in our Addresses to God, so for the most part we find it necessary in secret too: For there are few Persons of so steady and fixed a Power of Meditation as to maintain their Devotion warm, and to converse with God, or with themselves profitably, without words.

Expressions are useful not only to dress our Thoughts, but sometimes to form and shape and perfect the Ideas and Affections of our Minds. The use  
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Sect. 5. *Expression in Prayer.* 93

of Words makes us doubly sensible of the things we conceive. They serve to awaken the Holy Passions of the Soul as well as to express them. Our Expressions sometimes follow and reveal the warmer motions of the Heart, and sometimes they are dictated by the Judgment, and are a means to warm the Heart and excite those Holy Motions. They fix and engage all our Powers in Religion and Worship, and they serve to regulate as well as to encrease our Devotion. We are bid to take unto us Words and turn to the Lord, and say unto him, take away all Iniquity, and receive us graciously, *Hosea xiv. 2.* And in the Psalms of David, we often read of his crying to the Lord with his Voice, and making Supplication with his Tongue, when the matter of his Prayer is such that we have abundant Reason to believe that it was performed in Secret.

Here I shall *First* lay down some Directions how to attain a rich Treasure of Expression in Prayer. And *Secondly* give several Rules about the Choice and Use of proper Words and Expressions.

The Directions to attain a Treasure of Expressions are these.

1. Besides the general Acquaintance with God and with your selves that was prescribed under a former Head, Labour

after



94 *Expression in Prayer.* Chap. II.

after the fresh, particular and lively Sense of the Greatness and Grace of God, and of your own Wants and Sins and Mercies whenever you come to pray. This will furnish you with abundance of proper Expressions. The Passions of the Mind when they are moved do mightily help the Tongue. They fill the Mouth with Arguments. They give a natural Eloquence to those who know not any Rules of Art; and they almost constrain the Dumb to speak. There is a remarkable Instance of this in ancient History, when *Alys* the Son of *Cræsus* the King, who was Dumb from his Childhood, saw his Father ready to be Slain, the Violence of his Passion broke the Bonds wherewith his Tongue was tyed, and he cryed out to save him. Beggars that have a pinching Sense of Hunger and Cold, find out a variety of Expressions to tell us their Wants and to plead for Relief. Let our spiritual Senses therefore be always awake and lively, and our Affections be always warm and lead the Duty, then Words will follow in a greater or less Degree.

2. *Treasure up such Expressions especially as you read in Scripture, and such as you have found in other Books of Devotion, or such as you have heard Fellow-Christians make use of, whereby your own Hearts have been sensibly moved and warmed.*

Sect. 5. *Expression in Prayer.* 95

warmed. Those Forms of speaking, that have had great Influence and Success upon our Affections at one time, may probably have a like effect also at other Seasons, if so be we take care not to confine our selves to them constantly, lest Formality and Thoughtlessness should grow thereby.

Though the Limitation of our selves to a constant set Form of Words be justly disapproved, yet there is great Use of serious, pious and well composed Patterns of Prayer in order to form our Expressions, and furnish us with proper praying Language. Especially remember the more affectionate Sentences in the Psalms of *David* and *Job*, and other holy Men, when they breathe out their Souls to God in Worship.

These in a nearer and more particular Sense may be called the words which the holy Spirit teacheth; and whensoever they suit our Circumstances they will always be pleasing to God: Besides they are such as Christians are most acquainted with, and pious Souls are most affected with them. The Spirit of God in Praying and in Preaching will often bless the Use of his own Language: And I am perswaded, this is one way whereby the Spirit helps our  
Infir-

96 *Expression in Prayer.* Chap. II.

Infirmities, and becomes a Spirit of Supplication in us, by suggesting to us particular Passages of Scripture, that are useful to furnish us both with Matter and Expression in Prayer.

The most authentick Judge of fine Thoughts and Language that our Age has produced, assures us of the Beauty and Glory of the Stile of Scripture, and particularly in this respect, that 'tis most proper to teach us how to pray. I cannot forbear transcribing this Paragraph from the *Spectator*, June 14, 1712.

“ It happens very well (saith he) that  
“ the *Hebrew* Idioms run into the *Eng-*  
“ *lish* Tongue with a particular Grace  
“ and Beauty: Our Language has re-  
“ ceived innumerable Elegancies and  
“ Improvements from that Infusion of  
“ *Hebraisms*, which are derived to it  
“ out of the poetical Passages in holy  
“ Writ; they give a force and energy  
“ to our Expressions, warm and ani-  
“ mate our Language, and convey our  
“ Thoughts in more ardent and intent  
“ Phrases, than any that are to be met  
“ with in our own Tongue; there is  
“ something so Pathetick in this kind of  
“ Diction, that it often sets the Mind  
“ in a flame, and makes our Hearts burn  
“ within

Sect. 5. *Expression in Prayer.* 97

“ within us. How cold and dead (saith  
“ he) doth a Prayer appear that is com-  
“ pos’d in the most Elegant and Polite  
“ Forms of Speech which are natural  
“ to our Tongue, when it is not  
“ heighten’d by that Solemnity of  
“ Phrase which may be drawn from  
“ the sacred Writings. It has been  
“ said by some of the Antients, that if  
“ the Gods were to talk with Men,  
“ they would certainly speak in *Plato’s*  
“ Stile; but I think we may say with  
“ Justice, that when Mortals converse  
“ with their Creator, they cannot do  
“ it in so proper a Stile as that of the  
“ holy Scriptures.

It would be of excellent Use to improve us in the Gift of Prayer, if in our daily reading the Word of God we did observe what Expressions were suited to the several Parts of this Duty; Adoration, Confession, Petition, or Thanksgiving; and let them be wrought into our Addresses to God that Day. Nay, if we did but remember one Verse every Day, and fix it into our Hearts by frequent Meditation, and work it into our Prayers Morning and Evening, it would in time grow up to a Treasure of divine Sense and Language, fit to ad-  
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98 *Expression in Prayer.* Chap. II.  
dress our Maker upon all Occurrences  
of Life.

And it has been observed, that Persons of mean Capacity and no Learning have attained to a good Measure of this holy Skill of Prayer, meerly by having their Minds well furnished with words of Scripture, and have been able to pour out their Hearts before God in a fluency of proper Thoughts and Language, to the shame of those that have been blessed with brighter Parts, and have enjoy'd the Advantage of a learned Education.

Yet I would lay down two *Cautions* about the Use of Scripture-Language.

One is, that we should not affect too much to impose an allusive Sense upon the words of Scripture, nor use them in our Prayers in a Signification very different from the true Meaning of them. Not that I would utterly disallow and condemn all such allusive Expressions, as for instance, that which is frequently used when we desire Mercies for our Souls and Bodies, *to ask the Blessings of the upper, and the nether Springs.* There may be some such Phrases used pertinently enough: The commonness of them also makes them something more agreeable,  
yet

*Seft. 5. Expression in Prayer.* 99

yet if we affect to show our Wit or Ingenuity by seeking pretty Phrases of Scripture, and using them in an allusive Sense very foreign to the original Purpose of them, we shall be in danger of leading our selves into many Mistakes in the Interpretation of Scripture, and expose our selves sometimes to the Peril of mistaking the true Sense of a Text, by having frequently fixed a false Meaning upon it in our Prayers.

*Another Caution* in using Scripture Language is this, that we abstain from all those Expressions which are of a very dubious Sense, and hard to be understood; if we indulge the Use of such dark Sentences in our speaking to God, we might as well pray in an unknown Tongue which is so much disapprov'd by the Apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 9, 14. Let not therefore the Pomp and Sound of any obscure Phrases in Scripture allure us to be fond of them in social Prayer, even tho' we our selves should know the Meaning of 'em, lest we confound the Thoughts of our Fellow-worshippers.

3. *Be always ready to engage in holy Conference, and divine Discourse.* This will teach us to speak of the Things of God. Let it be your delightful Practice to recollect and talk over with one another

ther the Sermons you have heard, the Books of Divinity you have been conversant with, those parts of the Word of God you have lately read, and especially your own Experiences of divine Things. Hereby you will gain a large Treasure of Language to clothe your pious Thoughts and Affections.

'Tis a most profitable Practice after you have heard a Sermon, to confer with some Fellow-Christian that heard it too, and run over all the Particulars of it that you can retain in your Memory: Then retire and pray them over again; that is, make them the Matter and Substance of your Address to God; plead with him to instruct you in the Truths that were mention'd, to encline you to perform the Duties recommended, to mourn over and mortifie the Sins that were reprov'd, to teach you to trust and live upon the Promises and Comforts propos'd, and to wait and hope for the Glories revealed in that Sermon. Let this be done frequently afterwards in the same Week, if the Sermon be suited to your Case and Condition of Soul. This will furnish you incredibly with Riches of Matter and Expression for the great Duty of Prayer.

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*Sect. 5. Expression in Prayer.* 101

The Reason why we want Expressions in Prayer, is many times because we use our selves so little to speak about the things of Religion and another World. A Man that hath but a tolerable Share of natural Parts, and no great Volubility of Speech, learns to talk well upon the Affairs of his own Trade and Business in the World, and scarce ever wants Words to discourse with his Dealers; and the reason is, because his Heart and his Tongue are frequently engaged therein. Thus if our Affections are kept warm, and we use our selves frequently to speak of the things of Religion to Men, we shall learn to express our selves much better about the same divine Concerns when we come before God.

4. *Pray earnestly for the Gift of Utterance, and seek the Blessing of the Spirit of God upon the use of proper Means to obtain a Treasure of Expressions for Prayer.* The great Apostle prays often for a Freedom of Speech and Utterance in his Ministry, that he may speak the Mystery of Christ, and make it manifest so as he ought to speak. Colos. iii. 4. So the Gift of Utterance in Prayer is a very fit Request to be made to God, for the Advantage of our own Souls, and those that join with us.



102 *Expression in Prayer.* Chap. II

The wise Man tells us in *Prov. xvi. 1.* *That the Preparation of the Heart in Man, and the answer of the Tongue is from the Lord.* Let us pray then that when God hath prepared our Heart for his Worship, he would also teach our Tongue to answer the Thoughts and Desires of the Heart, and to express them in words suitable and answering to all our inward spiritual Affections. A happy Variety of Expression, and holy Oratory in Prayer, is one of those good and perfect Gifts that come from above, from God the Father of Lights and Knowledge, *James i. 17.*

The Rules about the Choice and Use of proper Expressions in Prayer are these.

- I. *Choose those Expressions that best suit your Meaning; that most exactly answer the Idea's of your Mind, and that are fitted to your Sense and Apprehension of things.* For the Design of Prayer is to tell God the inward Thoughts of your Heart; if you speak therefore what is not in the Heart, though the Words be never so fine and pathetical, 'tis but a meer Mockery of God: Let your Tongues be the true Interpreters of your Minds. When our Souls are filled with a lively Impression of some of the Attributes, or Works of God, when

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Sect. 5. *Expression in Prayer.* 103

our Hearts are over-poured with a Sense of our own Guilt and Unworthiness, or big with some important Request, O what a blessed Pleasure is it to hit upon a happy Expression, that speaks our very Soul, and fulfils all our Meaning! and what a Pleasure doth it convey to all that join with us, who have their spiritual Senses exercised! and it helps to excite in them the same Devotion that dictated to us the words we speak: The Royal Preacher, in Eccles. xii. 10. *Sought out and gave good heed to find, and to set in order acceptable words in his Sermons, that they might be as Goads, and Nails fastened by the Master of Assemblies:* That is, that they might leave a strong and lasting Impression on those that hear, that by piercing deep into the Heart as Goads they might be fixed as Nails. And there is the same Reason for the Choice of proper Words in Prayer.

2. *Use such a way of Speaking as may be most natural and easie to be understood, and most agreeable to those that join with you.* The Apostle gives this Direction to the Corinthians concerning their publick Worship, 1 Cor. xiv. 9. *Except ye utter by the Tongue words easie to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the Air.* Avoid therefore

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104 *Expression in Prayer.* Chap. II.

all foreign and uncommon Words which are borrow'd from other Languages, and not sufficiently naturalized, or which are old and worn out of use. Avoid those Expressions which are too Philosophical, and those which savour too much of mystical Divinity. Avoid a long train of dark Metaphors, or of Expressions that are used only by some particular violent Party of Men. Avoid Length and Obscurity in your Sentences, and in the placing of your Words, and do not interline your Expressions with too many *Parentheses*, which cloud and entangle the Sense.

And here I beg leave to give one or two Instances of each of these improper Methods of speaking; not that I ever heard these very Phrases used by any Ministers, or private Christians in Prayer. But as Vices of the Life are render'd most hateful, and are best cured or prevented by seeing them represented in their plainest and most odious Colours; so the Vices of Speech, and Improperities of Expression are best avoided by a plain Representation of them, in their own compleat Deformity. This will deter us from coming near them, and make us watchful against all those Forms of Speaking that border upon these

Sect. 5. *Expression in Prayer.* 105

these Follies. And indeed without giving Examples of each of these Faults, I know not how to make the unlearned Christian understand the things he ought to avoid.

By *uncommon* Words, I mean such as are either *too New* or *too Old* for common Use.

*Old* and *obsolete* Words are such as these; *we do thee to wit*, for, *we acquaint thee*. *Leasing*, for *Lying*. A *Gin* for a *Snare*. Some such words as these yet stand in our Translation of the Bible, many of these you may find in the old Translation of the Psalms in the Common-prayer Book, and in the Metre of *Hopkins* and *Sternhold*, which might be proper in the Age when they were written, but are now grown into Contempt.

*New* Words are for the most part borrow'd from foreign Languages, and should not be used in social Prayer, till they are grown so common, that there appears no difficulty to the Hearers, nor Affectation in the Speaker. Such as these which have a *French* Original. *Thou, O Lord, art our Dernier ressort*. i. e. our first Spring of Motion, or our last Refuge. *The whole World is but one great Machine managed by thy Puissance*. i. e.

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106 *Expression in Prayer. Chap. II.*

an Engine managed by thy Power. *We are Chagrin because of the barries and temptations of the Malign Spirit, i. e. we are vexed by the Temptations of the Devil: Or these which are borrow'd from the Latin. The beatific Splendors of thy Face irradiate the celestial Region, and felicitate the Saints: There are the most exuberant Profusions of thy Grace, and the sempiternal Efflux of thy Glory.*

By Philosophical Expressions, I intend such as are taught in the Academical Schools, in order to give learned Men a shorter and more comprehensive Knowledge of Things, or to distinguish nicely between Idea's that are in danger of being mistaken without such Distinction. As for Example, 'tis not proper to say to God in publick Prayer, *Thou Art hypostatically Three and essentially One. By the plenitude of Perfection in thine Essence, thou Art self-sufficient for thy own Existence and Beatitude; who in an incomplex Manner eminently tho' not formally includest all the infinite variety of complex Idea's that are found among the Creatures.* Such Language as this may be indulged perhaps in seeret by a Man that uies himself to think and meditate under these Forms, but his Meaner Fellow-Christians would no more be edify'd

*Sect. 5. Expression in Prayer. 107*

fy'd by them, than by praying in an unknown Tongue.

By the Language of *Mystical Divinity*, I mean such incomprehensible sort of Phrases, as a Sect of Divines among the Papists have used, and some few Protestants too nearly imitated. Such are of the *deiform Fund of the Soul*, the *super-sensual Life*, of singing a *Hymn of Silence*; that God is an *Abyss of Light*, a *Circle whose Center is every where, and his Circumference no where*. That *Hell is the dark World made up of spiritual Sulphur and other Ingredients not united or harmonized, and without that pure Balsamical Oil that flows from the Heart of God*. These are great Swelling-words of Vanity, that Captivate silly People into Raptures, by the meer Sound without Sense.

By running long *Metaphors*, I mean the pursuing of a Similitude or Metaphor, and straining so far as to injure the Doctrines of Religion by a false Sense, or very improper Expressions. Such was the Language of a foolish Writer, who bids us *give our Hearts to the Lord, cut them with the Knife of Contrition, take out the Blood of your Sins by Confession, afterward wash it with Satisfaction, &c.*

By

## 108 *Expression in Prayer.* Chap. II.

By Sentences that savour too high of *Party-zeal*, I mean such as would be useless, if not offensive to Christians of different Judgments that join with us in Prayer: we should not in our Prayers too much insist on the Corruptions of Doctrine and Worship in any Church, when some of that Communion join with us; nor of the Infants Interest in the Covenant of Grace, and the first Seal of it, when Baptists are worshipping with us together. Our Prayers should not savour of Anger and Uncharitableness, for we are bid *to lift up holy Hands without wrath*, 1 Tim. ii. 8.

When I recommend such Expressions as are easie to be understood, 'tis evident that you should avoid *long and entangled Sentences*, and place your Thoughts and Words in such an Order, as the Heart of the Hearers may be able to receive and join in the Worship, as fast as their Ears receive the Words: As in all our Conversations, and Conferences, and Discourses, we should labour to make every thing we say to be understood immediately, so especially in Prayer, where the Affections should be moved, which can't well be done if the Judgment must take much pains to understand the Meaning of what is said.

3. *Let*

Sect. 5. *Expression in Prayer.* 109

3. *Let your Language be grave and decent, which is a Medium between Magnificence and Meanness.* Let it be plain, but not coarse. Let it be clean, but not all lofty and glittering. *Job speaks of chusing his words to reason with God, Job ix. 14.* Some words are choice and beautiful, others are unseemly and disagreeable. Have a care of all wild irregular and vain Expressions that are unsuited to so solemn a part of Worship. The best Direction I can give you in this case, is to make use of such Language as you generally use in your serious Discourses upon religious Subjects, when you confer with one another about the Things of God. For then the Mind is composed to Gravity, and the Tongue should answer and interpret the Mind. The Language of a Christian in Prayer, is the clothing of his Thoughts, or the dress of his Soul, and it should be composed like the dress of his Body, decent and neat, but not pompous or gawdy, simple and plain, but not careless, uncleanly or rude.

Avoid therefore *glittering Language, and affected Stile.* When you address God in Worship, 'tis a Fault to be ever borrowing Phrases from the Theatre, and prophane Poets. This doth not  
seem



110 *Expression in Prayer.* Chap. II.

seem to be the Language of *Canaan*. Many of their Expressions are too light, and wild, and airy for so awful a Duty. An excessive fondness of Elegance and finery of Stile in Prayer, discovers the same Pride and Vanity of Mind, as an Affectation of many Jewels and fine Apparel in the House of God: It betrays us into a Neglect of our Hearts, and of experimental Religion, by an Affectation to make the nicest Speech, and say the finest Things we can, instead of sincere Devotion and Praying in the Spirit. Besides, if we will deal in lofty Phrases, Scripture it self sufficiently abounds with them, and these are the most agreeable to God, and most affecting to his own People.

Avoid *mean and coarse* and too familiar Expressions, such as excite any contemptible or ridiculous Ideas, such as raise any improper or irreverent Thoughts in the Mind, or base and impure Images; for these much injure the Devotion of our Fellow-worshippers. And 'tis a very culpable Negligence to speak to God in such a rude and unseemly Manner, as would ill become us in the Presence of our Fellow-Creatures, when we address our selves to them. Not but that God hears the Language of the meanest Soul

**Sec. 5. Expression in Prayer. III**

in secret, though he is not capable of Expressing himself with all the Decencies that are to be desired; yet it is certain, that we ought to seek to furnish our selves with becoming Methods of Expression, that so our Performance of this Duty may be rendred pleasing to those with whom we Worship, and there is no Necessity of being rough and slovenly in order to be sincere. Sometimes Persons have been guilty of great Indecencies, and exposed Religion to profane Scoffs, by a too familiar mention of the Name of Christ, and by irreverent Freedoms when they speak to God. I cannot approve of the Phrases of *rolling upon Christ*, of *swimming upon Christ to dry Land*, of *taking a lease of Christ for all Eternity*. I think we may fulfil that Command of coming boldly to the Throne of Grace without such Language, that can hardly be justified from Rudeness and Immodesty. Persons are sometimes in danger of Indecencies in borrowing *mean and trivial* or *uncleanly Similitudes*: They rake all the Sinks of Nastiness to fetch Metaphors for their Sins, and praying for the coming of Christ, they *fold up the Heavens like an old Cloak* and *Shovel Days out of the way*. By these few Instances  
you

## 112 *Expression in Prayer.* Chap. II.

you may learn what to avoid; and remember that Words as well as Things grow old and uncomely, and some Expressions that might appear decent three-score Years ago would be highly improper and offensive to the Ears of the present Age. It is therefore no sufficient Apology for these Phrases that Men of great Learning and most eminent Piety have made use of them.

4. *Seek after those ways of Expression that are patheticall, such as denote the Fervency of Affection and carry Life and Spirit with them;* such as may awaken and exercise our Love, our Hope, our Holy Joy, our Sorrow, our Fear and our Faith, as well as express the Activity of those Graces. This is the way to raise, assist, and maintain Devotion. We should therefore avoid such a sort of Stile as looks more like Preaching, which some Persons that affect long Prayers have been guilty of to a great Degree. They have been speaking to the People, and teaching them the Doctrines of Religion, and the Mind and Will of God, rather than speaking to God the Desires of their own Minds. They have wander'd away from God to Preach to Men. But this is quite contrary to the Nature of Prayer; for Prayer is our own Address to God, declaring

Sect. 5. *Expression in Prayer.* 113

clarifying our Sense of Divine things, and pouring out our Hearts before him with warm and proper Affections. And there are several Modes of Expression that promote this End. As,

(1.) *Exclamations*, which serve to set forth an affectionate Wonder, a sudden Surprise, or violent Impression of any thing on the Mind. *Psal. xxxi. 19. O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee! Psa. cxxxix. 17. How precious are thy Thoughts to me O God, how great is the Sum of them! Rom. vii. 24. O wretched Man that I am! who shall deliver me?*

(2.) *Interrogations*, when the plain Sense of any thing we declare unto God is turned into a Question to make it more Emphatical and affecting; *Pf. cxxxix. 7. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Whither shall I flee from thy Presence? verse 21, Do I not hate them that hate thee? Rom. vii. 24. Who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death?*

(3.) *Appeals to God* concerning our own Wants or Sorrows, our sincere and deep Sense of the things we speak to him. *John. xxi. 17. Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. So David appeals to God, Ps. lxix. 5. My Sins are not hid from thee. Pf. lvi. 8. Thou tellest*



## 114 *Expression in Prayer.* Chap. II.

tellest all our Travels or our Wandrings; are not my Tears in thy Book? Job. x. 7. Thou knowest that I am not wicked: My witness is in Heaven and my Record is on high. Job xvi. 19.

(4.) *Expostulations*, which are indeed one particular sort of Interrogation, and are fit to express, not only deep Dejections of the Mind, but to enforce any Argument that is used in pleading with God, either for Mercy for his Saints, or the Destruction of his Enemies. Isa. lxiii. 15, 17. Look down from Heaven, behold from the Habitation of thy Holiness and of thy Glory, where is thy Zeal and thy Strength? the sounding of thy Bowels and thy mercies towards me, are they restrained? O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy Ways? and hardened our Hearts from thy fear? Isa. li. 9, 10. Awake, awake, put on Strength, O arm of the Lord, art not thou it that hath cut Rahab and wounded the Dragon? Art not thou it that hath dried the Sea, the Waters of the great Deep? Psalm lxxvii. 8. Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Psal. lxxx. 4. O Lord God of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry? Ps. xliv. 24. Wherefore hidest thou thy Face and forgettest our Affliction? God invites his People thus to argue with him, Isa. i. 18. Come now let us Reason together, saith the Lord. And

**SECT. 5. Expression in Prayer. 115**

And Holy Men in humble and reverent Expostulations have with many Reasons pleaded their Cause before God, and their Words are recorded as our Patterns.

(5.) *Options, or Wishes, fit to set forth serious and earnest Desires.* Job vii. 8. *O that I might have my request,* Psalm cxix. 5. *O that my ways were directed to keep thy Statutes.*

(6.) *Apostrophe's, that is when in the midst of our Addresses to God we turn off the Speech abruptly to our own Soule, being led by the Vehemence of some sudden devout Thought.* So David in the beginning of the 16th Psalm. *Preserve me, O God, for in thee do I put my trust. O my Soul, thou hast said to the Lord, thou art my Lord, &c.* In Meditations, Psalms, Hymns, or other Devotional compositions these *Apostrophe's* may be longer and more frequent, but in Prayer they shou'd be very short, except when the Speech is turned from one Person of the blessed Trinity to another, thus  
“ Great God, hast thou not promised  
“ that thy Son should have the Heathen  
“ for his Inheritance and that he should  
“ Rule the Nations? Blessed Jesus, how  
“ long ere thou Assume this Kingdom?  
“ When wilt thou send thy Spirit to  
“ enlighten and convert the World?  
“ When,

## 116 *Expression in Prayer.* Chap. II.

“ When, O Eternal Spirit, wilt thou  
 “ come and shed abroad thy Light and  
 “ thy Grace thro’ all the Earth ?

(7.) *Ingeminations*, or redoubling our Expressions, which argue an eager and inflamed Affection. *Psal.* xciv. 1, 2. O Lord God to whom Vengeance belongeth, O God to whom Vengeance belongeth, shew thy self. *Psal.* cxxx. 6. My Soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the Morning, I say, more than they that watch for the Morning. And the Conclusion of *Psal.* lxxii. is, *Blessed be the Lord for evermore, Amen and Amen.* But here let us take Care to distinguish between those Repetitions that arise from real Fervency of Spirit, and those that are used meerly to lengthen out a Prayer, or that arise from meer barrenness of Heart, and want of Matter. It is far better, at least in publick Prayer, to yield to our present Indisposition, and shorten the Duty, than to fill up our time with constant Repetitions, such as, O Lord our God ; If it be thy blessed Will ; We intreat thee ; We beseech thee ; O Lord, have Mercy upon us. For though some of these Expressions may be properly enough repeated several times in a Prayer, yet filling up every empty Space, and stretching out almost evrey Sentence with them is not  
 agreea-

Sect. 5. *Expression in Prayer.* 117

agreeable to our Fellow-worshippers, nor an Ornament nor a Help to our Devotion or theirs.

5. *Do not always confine your selves to one set Form of Words to express any particular Request, nor take too much Pains to avoid an Expression merely because you used it in Prayer heretofore.* Be not overfond of a nice Uniformity of Words, nor of perpetual diversity of Expression in every Prayer. 'Tis best to keep the middle between these two Extreames. We should seek indeed to be furnished with a rich variety of Holy Language, that our Prayers may always have something new and something entertaining in them, and not tie our selves to express one thing always in one Set of Words, least this make us grow formal and dull and indifferent in those Petitions. But on the other Hand, if we are guilty of a perpetual Affectation of new Words, which we never before used, we shall sometimes miss our own best and most spiritual Meaning, and many times be driven to great impropriety of Speech; and at best our Prayers by this means will look like the Fruit of our Fancy, and Invention and Labour of the Head, more than the Breathings of the Heart. The Imitation of those Christians and Ministers, that have the best Gifts,



Gifts, will be an excellent Direction in this as well as in the former Cases.

## S E C T. VI.

*Of the Voice in Prayer.*

IV. **T**HE *Fourth* thing to be considered in the Gift of Prayer is the *Voice*.

Though the Beauty of our Expressions and the Tuneableness of our Voice can never render our Worship more acceptable to God the Infinite Spirit, yet our Natures being composed of Flesh and Spirit may be assisted in Worship by the harmony of the Voice of him that speaks. Should the Matter, Method, and Expressions be never so well chosen in Prayer, yet 'tis possible for the Voice to spoil the Pleasure and injure the Devotion of our Fellow-worshippers. When Speeches of the best Composition and the warmest Language are recited in a cold, harsh or ungrateful Way, the Beauty of them is almost lost.

Some Persons by Nature have a very sweet and tuneful Voice, that whatsoever they speak appears pleasing. Others must

Sect. 6. *Voice in Prayer.* 119

must take much more Pains and attend with diligence to Rules and Directions, that their Voice may be formed to an agreeable Pronunciation: For we find by sad Experience, that all the Advantages that Nature can obtain or apply to assist our Devotion, are all little enough to keep our Hearts from wandering and to maintain Delight: At least it is a necessary Duty to know and avoid those Disagreeable ways of Pronunciation that may rather disgust than edifie such as joyn with us.

I confess in secret Prayer there is no Necessity of a Voice: for God hears a Whisper as well as a Sigh and a Groan. Yet some Christians cannot pray with any Advantage to themselves, without the use of a Voice in some degree, nor can I judge it at all improper but rather preferable, so that you have a convenient place for Secresie: For hereby you will not only excite your own Affections the more, but by Practice in secret if you take due care of your Voice there, you may learn also to speak in publick the better.

The great and general Rule I would lay down for managing the *Voice* in Prayer is this, *Let us use the same Voice with which we usually speak in grave and serious*

*Serious Conversation, especially upon pathetic and affecting Subjects.* This is the best Direction that I know to regulate the Sound as well as the Words. Our own native and common Voice appears most Natural, and may be managed with greatest Ease. And some Persons have taken occasion to ridicule our Worship, and to censure us as Hypocrites, when we fondly seek and affect any new and different sort of Sounds or Voices in our Prayers.

The particular *Directions* are such as these.

1. *Let your Words be all pronounced distinct, and not made shorter by cutting off the last Syllable, nor longer by the Addition of Hem's and O's, of long Breaths, affected Groanings, and useless Sounds, of Coughing or Spitting, &c.* which some have heretofore been guilty of, and have sufficiently disgraced Religion.

If you cut off and lose the last Syllable of your Word, or mumble the last Words of the Sentence, and sink in your Voice, so that others cannot hear, they will be ready to think, 'tis because you did not speak properly, and so were afraid to be heard.

SECT. 6. *Voice in Prayer.*

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If on the other Hand you lengthen out your Sentences with ridiculous Sounds, you endanger the Devotion even of the wisest and best of your Fellow-worshippers, and expose the Worship to the prophane Raillery of idle and corrupt Fancies. While you seem to be designing to rub off the roughness of your Throat, or to express greater Affection by such Methods, others will suspect that 'tis a Method only to prolong your Sentences, to stretch your Prayers to an affected Length, and to recover your Thoughts what to say next. Therefore when your Passions happen to be elevated with some lively Expression in Prayer, and you are delightfully constrained to dwell upon it; or when you meditate to speak the next Sentence with Propriety, 'tis far better to make a long Pause, and keep a decent Silence, than to fall into such indecencies of Sound.

2. *Let every Sentence be spoken loud enough to be heard, yet none so loud as to fright or offend the Ear.* Between these two Extrems, there is a great variety of Degrees in Sound sufficient to answer all the changes of our Affections, and the different Sense of every part of our Prayer. In the beginning of Prayer

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especially a lower Voice is more becoming, both as it bespeaks Humility and Reverence, when we enter into the Presence of God, and as it is also a great Conveniency to the Organs of Speech not to arise too high at first; for 'tis much harder to sink again afterwards, than to rise to higher Accents if need require. Some Persons have got a Habit of beginning their Prayers, and even at the Blessing of Food upon a Table, so loud as to startle the Company; others so low that it looks like secret Worship, and as though they forbid those that are present to join with them. Both these Extrems are to be avoided by Prudence and Moderation.

3. *Observe a due Medium between excessive Swiftnes and Slowness of Speech, for both are faulty in their Kind.*

If you are too swift, your Words will be hurried on, and will (as it were) intrude upon one another, and be mingled in Confusion. 'Tis necessary therefore to observe a due Distance between your Words, and a much greater Distance between your Sentences; that so all may be pronounced distinct and intelligible.

Due and proper Pauses and Stops will give the Hearer time to conceive and re-

Sect. 6. *Voice in Prayer.* 123

reflect on what you speak, and more heartily to join with you, as well as give you leave to breathe and make the Work more easie and pleasant to your selves. Besides, when Persons run on heedless with an incessant flow of Words, being carried as it were in a violent Stream without Rests or Pauses, they are in danger of uttering things rashly before God, giving no time at all to their own Meditation, but indulging their Tongue to run sometimes too fast for their own Thoughts, as well as for the Affections of such as are present with them. And hence it comes to pass that some Persons have begun a Sentence in Prayer, and been forced to break off and begin a-new: Or if they have pursued that Sentence, it has been with so much Inconsistency, that it could hardly be reduced to Sense or Grammar; which has given too sensible an Occasion to others to ridicule all conceived Prayer, and has been very dishonourable to God and his Worship. All this arises from a hurry of the Tongue into the Middle of a Sentence, before the Mind has conceived the full and compleat Sense of it.

On the other hand, if you are too slow, and very sensibly and remarkably  
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So, this will also grow tiresome to the Hearers, while they have done with the Sentence you spoke last, and wait in pain, and long for the next Expression to exercise their Thoughts, and carry on their Devotion. This will make our Worship appear heavy and dull. Yet I must needs say that an Error on this hand in Prayer, is to be preferred before an excess of Speed and Hurry, and its Consequences are less hurtful to Religion.

In general, with regard to the two foregoing Directions, *Let the Sense of each Sentence be a Rule to guide your Voice, whether it must be high or low, swift or leisurely.* In the Invocation of God, in humble Adoration, in Confession of Sin and Self-resignation, a slower and a modest Voice is for the most part very becoming, as well as in every other part of Prayer, where there is nothing very Pathetical expressed. But in Petitions, in Pleadings, in Thanksgivings and Rejoicing in God, Fervency and Importunity, holy Joy and Triumph will raise the Voice some degrees higher; and lively Passions of the delightful Kind will naturally draw out our Language with greater Speed and Spirit.

4. *Let proper and different Accents be put wheresoever the Sense requires it.* It would be endless to give particular Rules how to place our Accents. Nature dictates this to every Man, if he will but attend to the Dictates of Nature. Yet in order to attain it in greater Perfection, and to secure our selves from Irregularity in this point, let us avoid these few things following.

1. *Avoid a constant Uniformity of Voice,* that is, when every Word and Sentence are spoken without any difference of Sound: Like a Boy at School repeating all his Lesson in one dull Note, which shows that he is not truly acquainted with the Sense and Value of the Author. Now though Persons may be truly sincere and devout who speak without any difference of Accent, yet such a Pronunciation will appear to others as Careless and Negligent, as though the Person that speaks were unconcerned about the great Work in which he is engaged, and as though he had none of his Affections moved, whereby his Voice might be modulated into agreeable Changes.

2. *Avoid a vicious Disposition of the Accents, and false Pronunciation.*



As for instance, 'tis a *vicious Pronunciation*, when a Person uses just the same sort of Accents, and repeats the same set of Sounds and Cadencies in every Sentence, though his Sentences are never so different as to their Sense, as to their Length, or as to the Warmth of Expression: As if a Man should begin every Sentence in Prayer with a high Voice, and end it in a low; or begin each Line with a hoarse and deep Bass, and end it with a shrill and sharp Sound. This is as if a Musician should have but one sort of Tune, or one single Set of Notes, and repeat it oyer again in every Line of a Song, which could never be graceful.

Another instance of *false Pronunciation* is, when strong Accents are put upon little Words, and Particles which bear no great Force in the Sentence. And some Persons are so unhappy, that those little Words, *they* and *that* and *of* and *by*, shall have the biggest Force of the Voice bestowed upon them, while the Phrases and Expressions of chief Signification are spoken with a cold and low Voice.

Another instance of *false Pronunciation* is when a calm plain Sentence, wherein there is nothing Pathetical, is deli-

delivered with much Force and Violence of Speech; or when the most patheticall and affectionate Expressions are spoken with the utmost calmness and composure of Voice. All which are very unnatural in themselves, and to be avoided by those that would speak properly to the Edification of such as Worship with them.

3. *Avoid a fond and excessive Affectation of humouring every Word and Sentence to extreams, as if you were upon a Stage in a Theatre.* Which Fault some serious Persons have fallen into for want of Caution. And it hath appeared so like Affectation, that it hath given great ground for Censure. As for instance.

If we should express every humble and mournful Sentence in a weeping Tone, and with our Voice personate a Person that is actually Crying, this is what our Adversaries have exposed by the name of *Canting* and *Whining*, and have thrown it upon a whole Party, for the sake of the Imprudence of a few.

Another instance of this excessive Affectation is, when we express every pleasurable Sentence in our Prayers, every Promise or Comfort, every Joy or Hope, in too free and airy a Manner, with too bold an Exultation, or with a

broad Smile: Which indeed looks like too familiar a dealing with the great God. Every odd and unpleasing Tone should be banisht from divine Worship; nor should we appear before God in Humility upon our Knees with Grandure and Magnificence upon our Tongues, lest the Sound of our Voice should contradict our Gesture, lest it should savour of Irreverence in so awful a Presence, and give Disgust to those that hear us.

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### S E C T. VII.

#### *Of Gesture in Prayer.*

**V. W**E proceed now to the *Fifth* and last thing considerable in the Gift of Prayer, and that is *Gesture*.

And though it may not so properly be termed a Part of the Gift, yet in as much as it belongs to the outward Performance of this piece of Worship, I cannot think it improper to treat a little of it in this place.

Since we are commanded to pray always, and at all Seasons, there can be no Posture of the Body unfit for short Ejaculations, and pious Breathings towards

# Sect. 7. *Gesture in Prayer.* 119

wards God; while we lye in our Beds, when we sit at our Tables, or are taking our Rest in any methods of Refreshment; our Souls may go out towards our Heavenly Father, and have sweet converse with him in short Prayers. And to this we must refer that Passage, *1 Cron. xvii. 16.* concerning David, where it is said, *he sat before the Lord, and said, Lord, who am I, or what is my House, that thou hast brought me hitherto?* But when we draw near to God in special Seasons of Worship, the Work of Prayer calls for a greater Solemnity, and in every thing that relates to it, we ought to compose our selves with great Reverence: That we may Worship God with our Bodies, as well as with our Spirits, and pay him Devotion with our whole Natures, *1 Cor. vi. 20.*

In our Discourse concerning *Gestures* fit for Worship, we shall consider *First*, the Posture of the whole Body, and *Secondly* of the particular Parts of it, and endeavour to secure you against Indelicacies in either of them.

*1. Those Postures of the whole Body,* which the Light of Nature, and Rule of Scripture, seem to Dictate as most

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proper for Prayer, are *Standing, Kneeling, or Prostration.*

*Prostration* is sometimes used in secret Prayer, when a Person is under a deep and uncommon Sense of Sin, and falls flat upon his Face before God, and pours out his Soul before him, under the Influence of such Thoughts, and the working of such Graces as produce very uncommon Expressions of Humiliation and Self-abasement. This we find in Scripture made use of upon many Occasions: As, *Abraham* fell on his Face before God, *Gen. xvii. 3.* and *Joshua* before the Lord *Jesus Christ*, the Captain of the Host of God. *Josh. vi. 14.* So *Moses, Ezekiel, and Daniel*, at other Seasons; so in the New Testament, when *John* fell at the Feet of the Angel to worship him, supposing it had been our Lord, *Rev. xix. 10.* And who could chuse but fall down to the Dust, at the presence of God himself?

*Kneeling* is the most frequent Posture used in this Worship, and Nature seems to dictate and lead us to it as an Expression of Humility, of a Sense of our Wants, a Supplication for Mercy, an Adoration of and a Dependence upon him before whom we Kneel. This Posture

Sect. 7. *Gesture in Prayer.* 131

sture hath been practised in all Ages, and in all Nations even where the Light of Scripture never shined: And if it might be had with Conveniency would certainly be a most agreeable Posture for the Worship of God, in publick Assemblies as well as in private Families, or in our secret Chambers. There are so many Instances and Directions for this Posture in Scripture, that it would be useless to take pains to prove it. So *Solomon*, 2 *Cron.* vi. 13. *Ezra*, *Ezr.* ix. 5. *Daniel*, *Dan.* vi. 10. *Christ* himself, *Luke* xxii. 41. *Paul*, *Act.* xx. 36. & xxi. 5. *Eph.* iii. 14.

In the last place, *Standing* is a Posture not unfit for this Worship, especially in Places where we have not Conveniency for the humbler Gestures. For, as *Standing* up before a Person whom we respect and reverence is a Token of that Esteem and Honour which we pay him, so *Standing* before God, where we have not Conveniencies of *Kneeling*, is an agreeable Testification of our high Esteem of him whom we then Address and Worship. There are Instances of this Gesture in the Word of God. *Mark* xi. 25. our Saviour says to his Disciples, *when ye stand praying*; and *Luke* xviii. 13. *The Publican stood afar off and pray-*  
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ed. *Standing* seems to have been the common Gesture of Worship in a large and publick Assembly, 2 *Chron.* xx. 4, 5, 13. And in this case it is very proper to conform to the Usage of Christians with whom we worship, whether *standing* or *kneeling*, since neither of them are made absolutely Necessary by the Word of God.

But I cannot think that *Sitting*, or other Postures of Rest and Laziness, ought to be indulged in solemn Seasons of Prayer, unless Persons are in any respect infirm or aged, or the Work of Prayer be drawn out so long as to make it troublesome to human Nature to maintain it self always in one Posture. And in these cases whatsoever Gesture of Body keeps the Mind in the best Composure, and fits it most to proceed in this Worship, will not only be accepted of God, but is most agreeable to him. For 'tis a great Rule that he hath given, and he will always stand by, that *Bodily exercise profiteth little*; for he looks chiefly after the Heart, and *he will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice.*

2. The Posture of the several Parts of the Body, that are most agreeable to Worship, and that may secure us from all Indecencies, may be thus particularized and enumerated. As

Sect. 7. *Gesture in Prayer.* 133

As for the *Head*, let it be kept for the most part without Motion; for there are very few turns of the Head in the Worship of Prayer, that can be accounted Decent. And many Persons have exposed themselves to Ridicule, by *rossings and shakings of the Head*, and nodding while they have been offering the solemn Sacrifice of Prayer to God. Though it must be allowed that in cases of great Humiliation, the *hanging down of the Head* is no improper Method to express that Temper of Mind. So the praying *Publican* in the Text forecited. So the *Jews* in the time of *Exra*, in a full Congregation *bowed their Head, and worshiped the Lord with their Faces toward the Ground, Nehem. viii. 6.* But in our Expressions of Hope and Joy, it's natural to *lift up the Head*, while we believe that our Redemption draws nigh; as in *Luke xxi. 28.* I might also mention the Apostle's Advice, that he that prays ought to have his Head uncovered, lest he dishonour his Head, *1 Cor. xi. 4.*

In the *Face* the God of Nature hath written various Indications of the Temper of the Mind; and especially when it is moved by any warm Affection.

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In divine Worship, the whole Visage should be compos'd to Gravity and Solemnity, to express a holy Awe and Reverence of the Majesty of God, and the high Importance of the Work wherein we are engaged.

In Confession of Sin, while we express the Sorrows of our Soul, Melancholy will appear in our Countenance, the Dejection of the Mind may be read there, and according to the Language of Scripture, *Shame and Confusion will cover our Faces*. The humble Sinner *blushes* before God at the Remembrance of his Guilt, *Jerem. li. 51. Ezra ix. 6.* Fervency of Spirit in our Petitions, and holy Joy when we give Thanks to our God for our Mercies, and rejoice in our highest Hope, will be discovered by very agreeable and pleasing Traces in the Features and Countenance.

But here let us take heed, that we do not expose our selves to the Censure of our Saviour, who reproved the *Pharisees* for disfiguring their Faces all that Day which they set apart for secret Fasting and Prayer, *Matt. vi. 16.* While we are engaged in the very Duty, some decent Appearances of the Devotion of the Mind in the Countenance are very natural and proper, and are not here forbidden.

Sect. 7. *Gesture in Prayer.* 135

bidden by our Lord, but at the same time 'tis best that those Discoveries or Characters of the Countenance should fall below, and stay behind the inward Affections of the Mind, rather than rise too high, or than go before. The Devotion of our Hearts should be warmer and stronger than that of our Faces: And we should have a Care of all irregular and disagreeable *Distortions of the Face*; all those affected Grimaces, and *wringing of the Countenance* as it were to squeeze out our Words or our Tears; which sometimes may tempt our Fellow-worshippers to disgust when they behold us; as well as on the other Hand avoid *Yawning*, and an Air of Listlessness and drowzy Gestures, which discover the Sloth of the Mind. 'Tis a terrible word spoken by *Jeremy* in another case, *Jer. xlviii. 10. Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently.*

To *lift up the Eyes to Heaven* is a very natural Posture of Prayer, and therefore the Psalmist so often mentions it, *Psal. cxxi. 1. & cxxiii. 1. & cxli. 8.* Though sometimes under great dejection of Spirit, and concern for Sin, 'tis very decent with the Publican to look down as it were upon the Ground,

as being unworthy to lift our Eyes up to Heaven where God dwells, *Luke xviii. 13.*

But above all a *roving* Eye ought to be avoided in Prayer; for though it may be possible for a Person that prays to keep his Thoughts composed whilst his Eyes wander, (which at the same time seems very difficult) yet Spectators will be ready to judge that our Hearts are given to wander as much as our Eyes are, and they will suspect that the Life and Spirit of Devotion is absent. Upon this account some Persons have found it most agreeable to keep the Eyes always closed in Prayer, lest by the Objects that occur to their Sight the Chain of their Thoughts should be broken, or their Hearts led away from God by their Senses: Nor can I think it improper to shut that Door of the Senses, and exclude the World while we are conversing with God.

The *lifting up of the Hands*, sometimes folded together, or sometimes apart, is a very natural Expression of our seeking help from God, who dwells above, *Psal. xxviii. 2. & cxxxiv. 2.* The Elevation of the Eyes, and the Hands, is so much the Dictate of Nature in all acts of Worship wherein we address God, that  
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Sect. 7. *Gesture in Prayer.* 137

the Heathens themselves frequently practised it, as we have an account in their several Writers, as well as we find it mentioned as the Practice of the Saints in the holy Scripture.

And as the Elevation of the Hands to Heaven is a very natural Gesture when a Person prays for himself; so when a Superior prays for a Blessing to descend upon any Person of an inferior Character, 'tis very natural to *lay his Hand upon the Head* of the Person for whom he prays. This we find practised from the beginning of the World, and the Practice descends throughout all Ages. 'Tis true indeed, this Gesture, the *imposition of Hands*, was used by the Prophets and Apostles, when they pronounced authoritative and divine Blessings upon Men, and communicated miraculous Gifts: But I esteem it not so much a peculiar Rite belonging to the prophetic Benediction, as it is a natural Expression of a desire of the divine Blessing from a Father to a Son, from an elder Person to one that is younger, from a Minister to other Christians, especially those that are Babes in Christ; and in a more particular Manner, when a Person is set apart and devoted to God in any solemn Office, whilst



whilst at the same time Prayers are made for a divine Blessing to descend upon him.

With regard to other parts of the Body, there is little need of any Directions. *Calmness and Quietness, and an Uniformity of Posture* seem to be most decent. Almost all Motions are disagreeable, especially such as carry with them any Sound or Noise, for hereby the Worship is rather disturbed than promoted.

In secret Devotion indeed *Sighs and Groans and Weeping* may be very well allowed, where we give vent to our warmest Passions, and our whole Nature and Frame is moved with devout Affections of the Mind. But in publick these things should be less indulged, unless in such extraordinary Seasons, when all the Assembly may be effectually convinced they arise deep from the Heart. If we indulge our selves in various *Motions or Noise made by the Hands or Feet*, or any other Parts, it will tempt others to think our Minds are not very intensely engaged, and will appear so familiar and irreverent as we would not willingly be guilty of in the Presence of our Superiors here on Earth. As we must not make our selves meer Statues, and  
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**SECT. 8. General Directions.** 139

lifeless Engines of Prayer, so neither must we out of pretence of Spirituality neglect all Decencies. Our Forms of Religion are not numerous, nor gaudy as the Jewish Rites, nor theatrical Gestures or superstitious Fopperies like the Papists, we have no need to be Matters of Ceremonies in order to worship God aright, if we will but attend to the simplicity of Manners which Nature dictates, and the Precepts and Examples of the Gospel confirm.

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**S E C T. VIII.**

*General Directions about the Gift of Prayer.*

**T**HUS have I finished what I designed upon the Gift of Prayer, with regard to the *Matter*, the *Method*, the *Expression*, the *Voice*, and the *Gesture*. I shall conclude this Chapter with these four *General Directions*.

I. *Keep the Middle way between a Nice and Laborious Attendance to all the Rules I have given, and a careless Neglect of 'em.* As every Rule seems to carry its own Reason with it, so it is proper that there should be some Regard had to it, when  
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Occasions for the Practice occur. For I have endeavoured to say nothing on this Subject, but what might some way or other be useful towards the attainment of an agreeable Gift of Prayer, and the decent Exercise of that Gift. The multiplicity of our Wants, the unfaithfulness of our Memories, the dullness and slowness of our Apprehensions, the common wandrings of our Thoughts, and the coldness of our Affections, will require our best Care for the Remedy of them.

—Yet on the other hand I would not have you confine your selves too precisely to all these Forms in Matter, Method, Expression, Voice and Gesture, upon every Occasion, lest you feel your selves thereby under some Restraint, and prevent your Souls of that divine Liberty, with which upon special Occasions the Spirit of God blesses his own People in the Performance of this Duty. When the Heart is full of good Matter, the Tongue will sometimes be as the *Pen of a ready Writer*, *Psal. xlv. 1.* Such a fixedness and fullness of Thought, such a Fervor of pious Affections, will sometimes produce so glorious a Fluency and Variety of pertinent and moving Expressions, and all in so just a Method,

Sect. 8. *General Directions.* 141

as makes it appear the Man is carry'd beyond himself, and would be straitned and cramped by a careful Attendance to Rules.

See then that all the Graces of Prayer are at work in your Souls with Power; let this be your first and highest Care; and by a sweet Influence this will lead you to a natural and easie Performance of this Duty, according to most of the particular Rules I have given, even without a nice and exact Attendance to them. So without Attendance to the Rules of Art, a Man may sometimes in a very musical Humour strike out some inimitable Graces and Flourishes, and charm all that hear him.

II. Among Ministers, — and among your Fellow-Christians, *observe those that have the most edifying Gifts*, and with regard to the Matter, Method, Expression, Voice and Gesture, *endeavour to imitate* them who are more Universally approved of, and the Exercise of whose Talents are most abundantly Blest to excite and maintain the Devotion of all their Fellow-worshippers. And at the same time also take notice of all the Irregularities and Indecencies that any Persons are guilty of in this Worship, in order to avoid them when you pray.

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## 2, 2 General Directions. Chap. II.

III. *Intreat the Assistance of some kind Christian Friend to give you notice of all the Irregularities that your selves may have been guilty of in Prayers, especially in your first Years of the Practice of this Duty, and esteem those the most valuable of your Friends, who will put themselves to the Trouble of giving you a modest and an obliging Hint of any of your own Imperfections: For 'tis not possible that we our selves should judge of the Tone of our own Voice, or the Gestures that we our selves use, whether they be agreeable to our Fellow-worshippers or no. And in other Instances also our Friends may form a more unbiass'd Judgment than our selves, and therefore are fittest to be our Correctors.*

For want of this some Persons in their Youth have gained so ill a Habit in speaking in publick, and so many Disorders have attended their Exercise of the Gift of Prayer, *ill Tones, vicious Accents, wild Distortions of the Countenance, and divers other Improprieties*, which they have carried with them all the Years of their Life, and have oftentimes exposed the Worship of God to Contempt, and hindred the Edification of those that join with them, rather than promoted it.

IV. *Be*

Sect. 8. *General Directions.* 143

IV. *Be frequent in the Practice of this Duty of Prayer, not only in secret but with one another.* For, though every Rule that I have before given were fixed in your Memories, and always at hand, yet without frequent Practice you will never attain to any great Skill and Readiness in this holy Exercise.

As our *Graces* themselves by being often tryed and put upon Action, become stronger and shine brighter, give God more Glory, and do more Service to Men; so will it fare with every Gift of the holy Spirit also, 'tis improved by frequent Exercise. Therefore the Apostle bids the young Evangelist *Timothy*, that he should *not neglect to stir up the Gift that was in him*, though it was a Gift communicated in an extraordinary way by the Imposition of Hands, *2 Tim. i. 6.* And therefore it is that some serious Christians that have less Knowledge will excel Persons of great Learning and Wit and Judgment in the Gift of Prayer, because tho' they do not understand the Rules so well, yet they practise abundantly more. And for the most part, if all other Circumstances are equal, it will be found a general Truth, that *He that Prays most Prays best.*

CHAP.



## C H A P. III.

*Of the Grace of Prayer.*

**I**N the two first Chapters I have finish'd what I propos'd, concerning the External Parts of Prayer; I proceed now to take a short View of the Internal and spiritual Part of that Duty; and this has been usually called the *Grace of Prayer*.

Here I shall endeavour to explain what it means, and shew how properly that Term is used: Afterward I shall particularly mention what are those inward and spiritual Exercises of the Mind; which are required in the Duty of Prayer, and then give Directions how to attain them.

But in the most part of this Chapter I shall pass over things with much Brevity, because it is not my Design in writing this Book to say over again, what so many practical Writers have said on these Subjects.

S E C T.

## S E C T. I.

*What the Grace of Prayer is, and how it differs from the Gift.*

**G**RACE in its most general Sense implies, the free and undeserved Favour of one Person toward another that is esteemed his Inferior: And in the Language of the New Testament, it is usually put to signify the Favour and Mercy of God toward sinful Creatures, which upon all Accounts is acknowledged to be free and undeserved: Now because our Natures are corrupt and averse to what is good, and whensoever they are changed and inclined to God and divine Things this is done by the Power of God working in us, therefore this very Change of Nature, this renewed and divine Frame of Mind, is called in the common Language of Christians by the Name of *Grace*.

If I were to write my Thoughts of the Distinction between the Terms of *Virtue*, *Holiness* and *Grace*, I should give them thus.

*Virtus* generally signifies the meer material Part of that which is good, without a particular Reference to God



as the Principle or End of. Therefore the good Dispositions and Actions of the Heathens were called *Virtues*. And this Word also is applied to Sobriety, Righteousness, Charity, and every thing that relates to our selves and our Neighbours, rather than to Religion and things that relate to divine Worship.

*Holiness* signifies all those good Dispositions and Actions, with their peculiar Reference to God as their End, to whose Glory they are devoted and performed. The word *Holy* signifies that which is devoted or dedicated.

*Grace* denotes the same Dispositions with a peculiar Regard to God as their Principle, intimating that they proceed from his Favour.

Sometimes this word is used in a comprehensive Sense, to signify the whole train of Christian Virtues, or the universal Habit of Holiness. So in those Texts, *John i. 14. The only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth;* and *ver. 16. of his fulness we have received Grace.* *2 Pet. iii. 18. Grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* And so in our common Language we say, Such a Person is a *graceless* Wretch, he has no *Grace* at all, i. e. no good Dispositions. We say such a  
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Sect. 1. of Prayer is. 147

one is truly Gracious, or he has a Principle of Grace, i. e. he is a Man of Religion and Virtue.

Sometimes it's used in its singular Sense, and means any one Inclination or holy Principle in the Mind. So we say, *The Grace of Faith, the Grace of Repentance, the Grace of Hope or Love.* So 2 Cor. viii. 7. *Therefore as ye abound in Faith, in Knowledge — in your Love to us, see that ye abound in this Grace also, i. e. Liberality.*

Sometimes 'tis used in a Sense a little more enlarged, but not universal, and it implies all those pious Qualifications that belong to any one Action or Duty; so we read of the Grace that belongs to Conversation, Col. iv. 6. *Let your Speech be always with Grace.* The Grace of singing, Col. iii. 16. *Singing with Grace in your Hearts;* and the Grace of divine Worship seems to be mentioned, Heb. xii. 28. *Let us have Grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence, &c.* and the Grace of Prayer, Zec. xii. 10. *I will pour on the House of David the Spirit of Grace and Supplications.*

The Grace of Prayer in our common Acceptation, is not any one single Act or Habit of the Mind, but it implies all those Holy Dispositions of Soul, which are

*necessary to be exercised in that Part of divine Worship.* It consists in a readiness to put forth those several Acts of the sanctified Mind, Will and Affections which are suited to the Duty of Prayer.

Hence will appear the great Difference that is betwixt the *Gift* and *Grace* of Prayer. The *Gift* is but the Outside, the Shape, the Carcase of the Duty. The *Grace* is the Soul and Spirit that gives it Life, and Vigor, and Efficacy, that renders it acceptable to God, and of real Advantage to our selves.

The *Gift* includes in it some faint Wishes and cold Desires toward the Things of God, but it chiefly consists in a Readiness of Thought, agreeable to the several Parts of Prayer, and a Facility of Expressing those Thoughts in speaking to God. The *Grace* consists meerly in the inward working of the Heart and Conscience toward God and Religion. The *Gift* has a shew and appearance of holy Desires and Affections, but holy Affections, sincere Desires, and real Converse with God belong only to the *Grace of Prayer*.

The *Gift* and the *Grace* are many times separated one from the other, and it hath been often found that the *Gift of Prayer*

Prayer hath been attain'd in a great degree by Study and Practice, and by the common Workings of the Spirit of God communicated to some Persons that have known nothing of true Grace. There may be also the *Grace of Prayer* in lively Exercise in some Souls, that have but a very small Degree of this *Gift*, and that hardly know how to form their Thoughts and Desires into a regular Method, or to express those Desires in tolerable Language.

Concerning some Persons it may be said, as in *Matt. vii. 22.* that tho' they could pour out abundance of Words before God in Prayer, though they could Preach like Apostles, or like Angels, or *cast out Devils in the Name of Christ*, yet our Lord *Jesus knows them not*, for they have no Grace. On the other Hand, there are some that are dear to God, that can but *chatter and cry like a Swallow, or a Crane*, as *Hezekiah* did, and yet are in the lively Exercise of the Grace of Prayer. But where both these, the *Gift* and the *Grace* meet together in one Person, such a Christian brings Honour to God, and has a greater Capacity and Prospect of doing much Service for Souls in the World, he is made of great

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Use to the Edification and Comfort of his Fellow-Christians.

Those Acts of the sanctified Soul in all its Powers, which are put forth in the Duty of Prayer, may be properly called so many Graces of the holy Spirit drawn forth into Exercise. And of these *some belong to the whole work and worship of Prayer, and others are peculiar to the several Parts of the Duty.*

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## S E C T. II.

### *General Graces of Prayer.*

**T**HE Graces that belong to the whole Work or Duty of Prayer are such as these.

I. *Faith or Belief of the Being of God, and his perfect Knowledge, and his gracious Notice of all that we speak in Prayer.* This Rule the Apostle gives, *Heb. xi. 6. He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of all that diligently seek him.* We should endeavour to impress our Minds frequently with a fresh and lively Belief of God's Existence, tho' he be so much unknown; of his Presence, tho' he be invisible; of his

his just and merciful Regard to all the Actions of Men, and especially their religious Affairs, that so Prayer may not be a Matter of Custom and Ceremony, but perform'd with a Design and Hope of pleasing God, and getting some Good from him. This Exercise of a lively *Faith* runs thro' every part of the Duty, and gives Spirit and Power to the whole Worship.

II. *Gravity, Solemnity and Seriousness of Spirit.*

Let a light and a trivial Temper be utterly banished, when we come into the Presence of God. When we speak to the Great Creator (who must also be our Judge) about the Concerns of Infinite and Everlasting Moment, we ought to have our Souls clothed with Solemnity, and not to assume those Airs which are lawful at other Seasons, when we talk with our Fellow-Creatures about meaner Affairs. A wantonness and vanity of Mind ought never to be indulged in the least Degree, when we come to perform any part of divine Worship; and especially when we who are but Dust and Ashes speak unto the Great and Dreadful God.

III. *Spirituality and Heavenly Mindedness* should run through the whole of

this Duty. For Prayer is a retirement from Earth, and a retreat from our Fellow-Creatures to attend on God, and hold Correspondence with him that dwells in Heaven. If our Thoughts are full of Corn and Wine and Oil, and the Business of this Life, we shall not seek so earnestly the Favour and Face of God, as becomes devout Worshippers. The things of the World therefore must be commanded to stand by for a Season, and to abide at the Foot of the Mount, while we walk up higher to offer up our Sacrifices as *Abraham* did, and to meet our God. Our Aims and Ends and Desires should grow more Spiritual, as we proceed in this Duty. And though God indulges us to converse with him about many of our Temporal Affairs in Prayer, yet let us take care that the things of our Souls and the Eternal World always possess the chief room in our Hearts. And whatsoever of the Cares of this Life enter into our Prayers, and are spread before the Lord, let us see that our Aims therein are Spiritual, that our very Desires of Earthly Comforts may be purified from all Carnal Ends, and sanctified to some Divine Purposes, to the Glory of God,

to the Honour of the Gospel, and the Salvation of Souls.

IV. *Sincerity and Uprightness of Heart* is another Grace that must run through this Worship. Whether we speak to God concerning his own Glories, whether we give him Thanks for his abundant Goodness, or confess our various Iniquities before him, or express our Desires of Mercy at his Hand, still let our Hearts and our Lips agree, and not be found Mockers of God, who searches the Hearts, and tries the Reins, and can spy Hypocrisie in the darkest Corners of the Soul.

V. *Holy Watchfulness and Intention of Mind upon the Duty* in which we are engaged; this must run through every Part of Prayer. Our Thoughts must not be suffered to wander among the Creatures, and rove to the Ends of the Earth, when we come to converse with the High and Holy God. Without this holy Watchfulness we shall be in danger of leaving God in the midst of the Worship, because the Temptations that arise from *Satan* and from our own Hearts are various and strong. Without this Watchfulness our Worship will degenerate into Formality, and we shall find Coldness and Indifferency creeping upon



our Spirits, and spoiling the Success of our Duties. *Watch unto Prayer* is a constant Direction of the great Apostle.

I might add to these, *Humility*, and *Delight* or Pleasure, and other Exercises of the sanctified Affections; but I shall have occasion more properly to mention them under the next Head.

### S E C T. III.

#### *Graces that belong to particular Parts of Prayer.*

**T**HE *Graces* that peculiarly belong to the several Parts of Prayer, are distinguished according to the Parts of this Duty. (viz.)

I. *Invocation*, or calling upon God, requires a special *Awe* of his Majesty to attend it, and a deep Sense of our own meanness and unworthiness; and at the same time we should express holy *Wonder* and *Pleasure*, that the most high God, who inhabits Eternity, will suffer such contemptible and worthless Beings as we are to hold Correspondence with him.

II. The work of *Adoration*, or Praise, runs through the several Attributes of the

the divine Nature, and requires of us the *Exercise of our various Affections suited to these several Attributes*. As when we mention God's Self-sufficiency and Independency, it becomes us to be humble, and acknowledge our Dependence; when we speak of his Power, and of his Wisdom, we should abase our selves before him, because of our Weakness and Folly, as well as stand in holy Admiration at the Infinity of those Glories of God. When we mention his Love and Compassion, our Souls should return much Love to him again, and have our Affections going forth strongly towards him. When we think of his Justice, we should have a holy Awe upon our Spirits, and a religious Fear suited to the Presence of the Just and Dreadful God. And the thought of his Forgiveness should awaken us to Hope and Joy.

III. In the *Confession* of our Sorrows and our Sins, *Humility* is a necessary Grace, and *deep Contrition* of Soul in the Presence of that God, whose Laws we have broken, whose Gospel we have abused, whose Majesty we have affronted, and whose Vengeance we have deserved. Here all the Springs of *Repentance* should be set open, and we should mourn

156 *Particular Graces* Chap. III.

mourn for Sin even at the same time, that we hope Iniquity is forgiven, and our Souls are reconciled to God. *Shame*, and *Self-Indignation*, and *holy Revenge* against the Corruptions of our Heart should be awakened also in this Part of Prayer.

IV. In our *Petitions* we should raise our *Desires* to *such different Degrees of Fervency* as the Nature of our Requests make necessary. When we pray for the things of the upper World, and eternal Blessings, we cannot be too warm in our Desires; when we seek the Mercies of Life, the degree of Fervency should be abated; for 'tis possible that we may be happy, and yet go without many of the Comforts of the present State. *Submission* is here required: And God expects to see his Children thus rationally Religious, and wisely to divide the Things that are most agreeable to his Will, and most necessary for our Felicity.

While we make Intercession for our Friends, or our Enemies, we ought to feel in our selves *warm and lively Compassion*; and when we pray for the Church of Christ in the World, we should animate all our Expressions with a *burning Zeal* for his Glory, and *Tenderness* for our Fellow-Christians.

V. *Plead-*

V. *Pleading with God* calls for *humble Importunity*. For the Arguments that we use with God in Pleading with him are but the various Forms of importunate Request. But because we are but Creatures and we speak to a God, *Humility* ought to mingle with every one of our Arguments. Our Pleadings with him should be so expressed as always to carry in them that Decency and that Distance that becomes Creatures in the presence of their Maker. In Pleading also we are required to exercise *Faith in the Promises* of the Gospel, *Faith in the Name of Christ Jesus* our Mediator, *Faith in the Mercies of our God* according to the Discoveries he hath made of himself in his Word. We are called to believe that he is a God hearing Prayer, and will bestow upon us what we seek so far as is necessary for his Glory and our Salvation. *He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Heb. xi. 6. Here also the Grace of *Hope* comes into exercise, for while we trust the Promises, we hope for the things promised or the things for which we petition. We ought to maintain a *humble holy Expectation* of those Mercies for which we plead with God. We must *direct our Prayer*  
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158 *Particular Graces* Chap. III.

to him and *look up*, with *David*, Ps. v. 3. and with *Habbakuk*, *stand upon our watch-tower*, and *see what he will answer us*. Hab. ii. 1.

VI. In that part of Prayer which is called *Profession* or *Self-resignation*, great *Humility* is again required; a sweet *Submission to his Will*, a Composedness and a Quietness of Spirit under his Determinations, even though for Reasons of Infinite Wisdom and Love he with-hold from us the particular Comforts that we seek. Here let *Patience* have its perfect Exercise, and let the Soul continue in a humble Frame waiting upon God. While we give up our selves to God a Divine *Steddiuess* of Soul should attend it, and the *firmest Courage of Heart* against all Oppositions while we confirm all our Self-dedications to the Lord.

VII. In *Thanksgiving*, a most hearty *Gratitude* of Soul is required, a deep Sense of Divine Favours, and a readiness to return unto God according to his Goodness to the uttermost of our Capacities. A growing *Love* to God and *sincere Longing to do something for him* answerable to the Variety and Riches of his Grace towards us. Here also with *Holy Wonder* we acknowledge the Condescension of God to bestow Mercies upon  
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on us so unworthy; and this Wonder should arise and grow up into *Divine Joy*, while we bless our Maker for the Mercies of this Life, and our Father for an Interest in his Covenant and his Special Love. And in our *Thanksgivings* we should be sure to take Notice of all Returns of Prayer, all merciful Appearances of God in answer to our Requests; for 'tis but a poor Converse is maintained with God if we are only careful about our speaking to him, but take no Notice of any Replies he condescends to make to our poor and worthless Addresses.

VIII. When we *Bless* God we should show an earnest *Longing after the Honour of the Name of God*, and our Souls should breathe fervently after the Accomplishment of those Promises wherein he hath engaged to spread his own Honours and to magnifie his own Name and the Name of his Son; we should as it were *exult and triumph* in those Glories which God, our God possesses, and rejoyce to think that he shall for ever possess them.

Then we *Conclude* the whole Prayer with our *Amen* of *Sincerity* and of *Faith*, in one short Word expressing over again our Adorations, our Confessions and our Petitions; trusting and hoping for the  
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Audience of our Prayers and Acceptance of our Persons, from whence we should take Encouragement to rise from this Duty with a sweet Serenity and Composure of Mind, and maintain a joyful and a heavenly Frame, as those that have been with God.

But lest some pious and humble Souls should be discouraged when they find not these lively Exercises of Faith, Hope, Love, Fervency of Desire, and Divine Delight in Worship, and thence conclude that they have not the *Grace of Prayer*, I would add this *Caution*, (*viz.*) That all the Graces of Prayer are seldom at work in the Soul at once in an eminent and sensible Degree, sometimes one prevails more and sometimes another in this feeble and imperfect State: And when a Christian comes before God with much deadness of Heart, much overcome with Carnal Thoughts, and feels great Reluctancy even to the Duty of Prayer, and falls down before God mourning, complaining, self-condemning, and with Sighs and deep Groans in secret makes known his Burthen and his Sins to God, tho' he can speak but few Words before him, such a frame and temper of Mind will be approved of by that God who judges the Secrets of the Heart, and  
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makes most compassionate Allowances for the Infirmary of our Flesh, and will acknowledge his own Grace working in that Soul, tho' it be but just breathing and struggling upward thro' Loads of Sin and Sorrow.

#### S E C T. IV.

#### *Directions to attain the Grace of Prayer.*

**I**N order to direct us in the Spiritual Performance of this Duty, we must consider it as a Holy Converse maintain'd betwixt Earth and Heaven, betwixt the Great and Holy God and mean and sinful Creatures. Now the most natural Rules that I can think of to carry on this Converse are such as these.

1. *Possess your Hearts with a most affecting Sense of the Characters of the two Parties that are to maintain this Correspondence, that is, God and your selves.* This indeed is one Direction for the Gift of Prayer, but it is also most necessary to attain the Grace. Let us consider who this Glorious Being is, that invites us to this Fellowship with himself; how awful in Majesty, how terrible in Righteousness,



162 *Directions to attain* Chap. III.

ousness, how irresistible in Power, how unsearchable in Wisdom, how allsufficient in Blessedness, how condescending in Mercy. Let us again consider who are we that are invited to this Correspondence, how vile in our Original, how guilty in our Hearts and Lives, how needy of every Blessing, how utterly incapable to help our selves, and how Miserable for ever if we are without God.

And if we have sincerely obeyed the Call of his Gospel, and have attained to some comfortable Hope of his Love, let us consider how infinite are our Obligations to him, and how necessary and how delightful it is to enjoy his Visits here, with whom it will be our Happiness to dwell for ever. When we feel our Spirits deeply imprest with such Thoughts as these are, we are in the best Frame and most likely way to pray with Grace in our Hearts.

2. When you come before God, *Remember the Nature of this Correspondence, it is all Spiritual; Remember the Dignity and Privilege, the Design and the Importance of it.*

A Sense of the high Favour in being admitted to this *Privilege and Honour*, will fill your Souls with humble Wonder, and with heavenly Joy, such as becomes

*Seet. 4 the Grace of Prayer.* 163

comes the Favourites and Worshippers of an Infinite God. A due Attendance to the *Design and Importance* of this Duty will fix your Thoughts to the most unmoveable Attention and strict Watchfulness, it will overspread your Spirit with Seriousness, it will command all your inward Powers to Devotion, and will raise your Desires to a holy Fervency. You pray to him that hath Power to save and to destroy about your Eternal Destruction or Eternal Salvation, and if Eternity with all its awful Attendance will not awaken some of the Graces of Prayer, the Soul must be in a very stupid Frame.

3. *Seek earnestly a State of Friendship with him with whom you converse, and labour after a good Hope and Assurance of that Friendship.* We are all by Nature Enemies to God and Children of his Wrath, Rom. viii. 7. and Eph. ii. 2. If we are not Reconciled we can never hold Communion with him. How can we delight in Converse with an Enemy so Almighty? or pay him due Worship, while we believe he hates and will destroy us? But O how unspeakable is the Pleasure in holding Converse with so infinite, so almighty and so compassionate a Friend? And how ready will all  
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164 *Directions to attain* Chap. III.

the Powers of our Nature be to render every Honour to him, while we feel and know our selves to be his Favourites and the Children of his Grace? while we believe that all his Honours are our Glory in this State of Friendship, and each of his Perfections are the Pillars of our Hope and Assurances of our Happiness?

Now in order to obtain this Friendship, and to promote this divine Fellowship, I recommend you to the next Direction.

4. *Live much upon and with Jesus the Mediator, by whose Interest alone you can come near God, and be brought into his Company. Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life: And no Man comes to the Father but by him, John xiv. 6. Thro' him Jews and Gentiles have access unto the Father, Eph. ii. 18. Live much upon him therefore by Trust and Dependance, and live much with him by Meditation and Love.*

When a Sinner under first Convictions sees with Horror the dreadful Holiness of God, and his own Guilt and Desert of Damnation, how fearful is he to draw near to God in Prayer? and how much discouraged while he abides without Hope? But when he first beholds  
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**Sect. 4. *The Grace of Prayer.* 165**

Christ in his Mediatorial Offices and his glorious All-sufficiency to save, when he first beholds this new and living way of Access to God consecrated by the Blood of Christ, how chearfully doth he come before the Throne of God, and pour out his whole Soul in Prayer? And how lively is his Nature in the Exercise of every Grace suited to his Duty? How deep his Humility? How fervent his Desires? How importunate his Pleadings? How warm and hearty are his Thanksgivings?

And we have need always to maintain upon our Spirits a deep Sense of the Evil of Sin, of our Desert of Death, of the dreadful Holiness of God, and Impossibility of our Converse with him without a Mediator, that to the Name of *Jesus* may be ever precious to us, and that we may never venture into the Presence of God in set and solemn Prayer without the Eye of our Soul to Christ our glorious Introducer.

5. *Maintain always a praying Frame; a temper of Mind ready to converse with God. This will be one way to keep all praying Graces ever ready for Exercise. Visit him therefore often and upon all Occasions with whom you would obtain some immediate Communion as*  
*solemn*



166 *Directions to attain* Chap. III.

solemn Seasons of Devotion, and make the Work of Prayer your Delight, nor rest satisfied 'till you find Pleasure in it.

What Advantages and Opportunities soever you enjoy for social Prayer do not neglect praying in secret: At least once a Day constrain the Business of Life to give you leave to say something to God alone.

When you join with others in Prayer where you are not the Speaker, let your Heart be kept intent and watchful to the Work, that you may pray so much the better when you are the Mouth of others to God.

Take frequent Occasion in the midst of your Duties in the World to lift up your Heart to God: He is ready to hear a sudden Sentence, and will answer the Breathings of a holy Soul toward himself in the short Intervals or Spaces betwixt your daily Affairs. Thus you may *pray without ceasing* as the Apostle directs, and your Graces may be ever lively. Whereas if you only make your Addresses to God in Morning and Evening, and forget him all the Day, your Hearts will grow indifferent in Worship, and you will only pay a Salutation with your Lips and your Knees, and fulfil the Task with dull Formality.

6. *Seek*

6. *Seek earnestly the Assistance of the Holy Spirit.* It is he that works every Grace in us, and fits for every Duty; it is he that awakens sleeping Graces into Exercise; it is he that draws the Soul near to God, and teaches us this Correspondence with Heaven. He is the Spirit of Grace and Supplication; but because this is the Subject of the following Chapter, I shall pursue it no further here.



# CHAP. IV.

## *Of the Spirit of Prayer.*

**A**LL the Rules and Directions that have hitherto been laid down in order to teach us to pray, will be ineffectual if we have no divine Aids, *We are not sufficient of our selves to think one Thought,* and all that is Good comes from God. If therefore we would attain the Gift or Grace of Prayer we must seek both from Heaven; and since the Mercies of God of this Kind that are bestowed on Men are usually attributed to the Holy Spirit, he may very properly be

be called the *Spirit of Prayer*, and as such his Assistance is to be sought with Diligence and Importunity.

I confess the *Spirit of Prayer* in our Language may sometimes signify A temper of Mind well furnished and ready for the Work of Prayer. So when we say, *There was a greater Spirit of Prayer found in Churches in former Days than now*; we mean, there was a greater degree of the Gift and Grace of Prayer found amongst Men; their Hearts and their Tongues were better furnished and fitted for this Duty. But to deny the *Spirit of Prayer* in all other Senses, and declare there is no need of any Influences from the Holy Spirit to assist us to pray, carries in it a high degree of Self-sufficiency and borders upon Prophaneness.

My Business therefore in this Chapter shall be to prove, by plain and easie Arguments, that the Spirit of God doth assist his People in Prayer. Then to show what his Assistances are, and how far they extend, that we may not expect more from him than Scripture promises, nor attribute too little to his Influences: And after a few Cautions laid down, I shall proceed to give some Directions how the Aids of the Holy Spirit may be obtain'd.

SECT.

## S E C T. I.

*Proofs of the Assistance of the Spirit of God in Prayer.*

**T**HE Methods of proof which I shall use to evince the Influences of the Spirit of God in Prayer are these three, (1.) Express Texts of Scripture. (2.) Collateral Texts. (3.) The Experience of Christians.

I. The First Argument is drawn from such *express Texts of Scripture* as these.

*Zac. xii. 10. I will pour out on the House of David, and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, a Spirit of Grace, and of Supplications.* Here the holy Spirit of God is called a Spirit of Supplication, with respect to the special Operation and Ends for which he is here promised. The plentiful Communication of his Operations to Men, is often expressed by pouring him out upon them, as *Isa. xlv. 3. Prov. i. 23. Tit. iii. 6.* and many other places. Now that this Prophecy refers to the times of the Gospel is evident, because the Effect of it is a looking to Christ as pierced or crucified. *They shall look on him whom they have pierced.*

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*Objection.*



*Objection.* Some will say this Promise only refers to the *Jews* at the time of their Conversion.

*Answer.* Most of these exceeding great and precious Promises, that relate to Gospel times, are made expressly to *Jacob*, and *Israel*, and *Jerusalem*, and *Sion*, in the Language of the Old Testament. And how dreadfully should we deprive our selves, and all *Gentile* Believers, of all these gracious Promises at one Stroke, by such a confined Exposition? Whereas the Apostle *Paul* sometimes takes Occasion to quote a Promise of the Old Testament made to the *Jews*, and applies it to the *Gentiles*, as 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17, 18. *I will dwell in them, and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my People;* which is written for the *Jews* in *Levit. xxvi. 12.* *Come out from among them — touch no unclean thing — and I will be a Father to you, &c.* which are cited from *Esa. lii. 11.* & *Jer. xxxii. 1, 9.* where *Israel* alone is mentioned. And yet in 2 Cor. vii. 1. the Apostle says, *Having therefore these Promises, dearly Beloved, let us cleanse our selves, &c.* And thus he makes the *Corinthians* as it were Possessors of these very Promises. He gives us also much Encouragement.

couragement to do the same, when he tells us, *Rom. xv. 4. Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our Learning, that we through Patience and Comfort of the Scriptures might have hope:* and ver. 8, 9. he assures us that *Jesus Christ confirms the Promises made to the Fathers, that the Gentiles may glorifie God for his Mercy.* Again in *2 Cor. i. 20. All the Promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, to the Glory of God.* Now, it would have been to very little purpose to have told the *Romans* or the *Corinthians* of the Stability of all the Promises of God, if their Faith might not have embraced them.

We are said to be *blessed with faithful Abraham*, if we are Imitators of his Faith. *Gal. iii. 29. If we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's Seed, and Heirs according to the Promise; Heirs by Faith of the same Blessings that are promised to Abraham and to his Seed. Rom. iv. 13.* Now this very Promise, the Promise of the Spirit, is received by us *Gentiles* as Heirs of *Abraham*. *Gal. iii. 14. That the Blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, that we might receive the Promise of the Spirit through Faith.* Being interested therefore in his Covenant, we have a Right to

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the same Promises, so far as they contain Grace in them that may properly be communicated to us. And therefore the House of *David* in this Prophecy of *Zechariah*, doth not only signify the natural Descendants of *David* the King, but very properly includes the Family of Christ, the true *David*; Believers that are his Children; and Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, and Members of the true Church, whether they were originally *Jews* or *Gentiles*: For in *Christ Jesus* Men are not known by these Distinctions, there is neither *Jew* nor *Greek*, *Gal. iii. 28.*

*Luke xi. 13.* After *Christ* had answered the Request of his Disciples, and taught them how to pray, by giving them a Pattern of Prayer, he recommends them to ask his Father for the holy Spirit, in order to a fuller and further Assistance and Instruction in this Work of Prayer, as the whole Context seems to intimate.

*Rom. viii. 26.* *The Spirit helpeth our Infirmities, for we know not what to pray for, as we ought, but the Spirit it self maketh intercession for us with Groanings which cannot be uttered.* This cannot be interpreted as though the holy Spirit assumed the Work of Christ, who is our proper

proper Intercessor and Advocate: For the Spirit not being clothed with human Nature, cannot properly be represented under such an inferior Character, as the Nature of Prayer or Petition seems to imply: Whereas our Lord *Jesus Christ* being Man as well as God, may properly assume the Character of a Petitioner. The Business of the holy Spirit therefore is to teach and help us to plead with God in Prayer, for the things which we want. And this will appear evidently by the next Scripture.

*Gal. iv. 6. God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts crying, Abba Father. That is, the Spirit of God inclines and teaches us to address God in Prayer, as our Father. And so 'tis explained, Rom. viii. 15. Ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father. It may be noted here, that this Spirit of Adoption belongs to every true Christian in more or less Degrees, otherwise the Apostle's Reasoning would not appear strong and convincing. Because ye are Sons, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son, &c.*

*Eph. vi. 18. Praying always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all Perseverance. These words in  $\pi\alpha\sigma\iota$  [in the Spirit]*



have Reference to the Work of the Spirit of God in us, for so the word ἐν πνεύματι signifies in other places of the New Testament. *Matt. xii. 28. I cast out Devils by the Spirit of God. Luke ii. 27. He came by the Spirit into the Temple. 1 Cor. xii. 8, 9. To one is given by the Spirit the Word of Wisdom, to another Knowledge by the same Spirit, &c.* In this Verse of the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, it cannot properly signifie *Praying with our own Spirit*, that is with the Intention of our own Minds, because that seems to be implied in the next Words, *watching thereunto.*

*Objection.* Some will say still, that this *Praying in the Spirit* was to be performed by an extraordinary Gift, which was communicated to the Apostles, and many others in the first Age of Christianity. Something like the Gift of Tongues at *Pentecost*, and various Gifts among the *Corinthians*, when they prayed and preached and sung by Inspiration, *1 Cor. xiv.*

*Answer.* Whatsoever there was of extraordinary and miraculous Communications of the Spirit in those first Days of the Gospel, we pretend not to the same now. But the Assistances of the Spirit, whereof we speak, are in some measure attainable by Christians in all Ages; for  
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in this *Ephes. vi. 18. Praying in the Spirit* is enjoined to all Believers, and at all times, with all sorts of Prayer. Now 'tis not to be supposed, that at all times, and in all sorts of Prayer, Christians should have this extraordinary Gift.

We may also further Remark, that the *Gift of Prayer* it self is not expressed as such an extraordinary and miraculous Gift, neither in the Prophecy of *Joel* chap. ii. nor in *Acts* chap. ii. where that Prophecy of *Joel* is accomplished; nor is it mentioned particularly in the Epistles of *St. Paul* among the miraculous Gifts of the holy Spirit, in those Places where they are enumerated. But only the *Gift of Prayer in an unknown Tongue* seems to be spoken of in *1 Cor. xiv.* which rather refers to the *Gift of Tongues* than to that of *Prayer*. And 'tis not unlikely that the Omission or Silence of the *Gift of Prayer* in those Texts, might be designed for this very purpose, (*viz.*) that though there were Gifts of Prayer by immediate Inspiration in those Days; yet that there should be no bar laid against the Expectation of Christians in all Ages of some divine Assistances in Prayer, by a pretence that this was only an extraordinary Gift to the Apostles, and the first Christians.

have Reference to the Work of the Spirit of God in us, for so the word is *πνευματικῶς* signifies in other places of the New Testament. *Matt. xii. 28. I cast out Devils by the Spirit of God. Luke ii. 27. He came by the Spirit into the Temple. 1 Cor. xii. 8, 9. To one is given by the Spirit the Word of Wisdom, to another Knowledge by the same Spirit, &c.* In this Verse of the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, it cannot properly signify *Praying with our own Spirit*, that is with the Intention of our own Minds, because that seems to be implied in the next Words, *watching thereunto.*

*Objection.* Some will say still, that this *Praying in the Spirit* was to be performed by an extraordinary Gift, which was communicated to the Apostles, and many others in the first Age of Christianity. Something like the Gift of Tongues at *Pentecost*, and various Gifts among the *Corinthians*, when they prayed and preached and sung by Inspiration, *1 Cor. xiv.*

*Answer.* Whatsoever there was of extraordinary and miraculous Communications of the Spirit in those first Days of the Gospel, we pretend not to the same now. But the Assistances of the Spirit, whereof we speak, are in some measure attainable by Christians in all Ages; for  
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in this *Ephes. vi. 18. Praying in the Spirit* is enjoined to all Believers, and at all times, with all sorts of Prayer. Now 'tis not to be supposed, that at all times, and in all sorts of Prayer, Christians should have this extraordinary Gift.

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James v. 16. which we translate *the effectual fervent Prayer of the Righteous*. In the Original it is *δυναμις ἐν ἑαυτῷ*, *the inwrought Prayer*. This word is used to signifie Persons possessed with a good or evil Spirit, and it signifies here Prayer wrought in us by the good Spirit that possesses us, that leads and guides us. And the word is used in this Sense several times in 1 Cor. chap. xii. where the Gifts of the holy Spirit are spoken of. Yet let it be observed, that here the Apostle is speaking of such an *inwrought Prayer* as all Christians might be capable of, for his Epistle is directed to all the scatter'd Tribes of Israel, Jam. i. 1. and he bids them all *confess their Faults to one another, and pray for one another that they might be healed*, and for this Reason, because the *inwrought Prayer of the Righteous availeth much*.

The last Text I shall mention is Jude ver. 20. *Praying in the holy Ghost, keep your selves in the Love of God*. Now this Epistle is written to all that are *sanctified by God the Father, preserved and called in Jesus Christ*, ver. 1. They are all directed to pray by the Assistance of the holy Ghost. And those *who have not this Spirit*, in ver. 19. are said to be *se-*  
*sual*.

I confess the holy Spirit hath been in a great Measure so long departed from his Churches, that we are tempted to think that all his Operations in Exhortation, Prayer and Preaching belong only to the first Age of Christianity, and to the extraordinary Ministers, Prophets and Apostles; and 'twas from this absence of the Spirit that Men proceeded to invent various Methods to supply the want of him in Prayer, by *Pater Noster's*, *Beads*, *Litanies*, *Responses*, and other Forms, some good and some bad, to which they confined the Churches, to keep up the Form of Worship and the Attention of the People; and at best we are left by many Teachers to the use of our meer natural Powers, our Reason and Memory: And hence spring those reproachful Expressions about the *Spirit of Prayer*, and the endless Labours of Men to make this word signify only the temper and disposition of the Mind: So the *Spirit of Adoption* in their Sense is nothing but a Child-like Temper, and the *Spirit of Prayer* means nothing else but a praying Frame of Heart:

But since some Texts expressly speak of the *holy Spirit*, as working these Things in us, since in many Scriptures the *Spirit of God* is promised to be given

us, to dwell in us, and be in us, and to assist in Prayer, why should we industriously exclude him from the Hearts of the Saints, and thrust him out of those Scriptures, wheresoever the words will possibly endure any other Sense? 'Tis in my Opinion much more natural and reasonable for us to interpret those places where the *Spirit* is mentioned, according to the plain Language of clearer Texts where the Name of *God's own Spirit* is written.

However, if a Man will but allow the Spirit of God, and his Assistances in Prayer, to be mentioned in any one Text of Scripture, so far as to be persuaded and encouraged thereby to seek those Assistances that he may pray better, I will not be angry with him that he can't find this Spirit in every Text, where others believe he is spoken of and design'd.

II. The *second Argument* for the Aids of the holy Spirit in Prayer, is drawn from collateral Scriptures, and such are all those Texts which represent the blessed Spirit as the Spring of all that is good in us, and show us that all other Duties of the Christian Life are to be performed in and by this holy Spirit. Saints are *born of this Spirit*, John iii. 6. *Are led*

led by the Spirit, Rom. viii. 14. *Walk in the Spirit*, Gal. v. 16. *Live in the Spirit*, Gal. v. 25. *By this Spirit mortifie the Deeds of the body*, Rom. viii. 13. The Spirit convinces of Sin, John xvi. 9. and fits us for Confession: The Spirit witnesseth with our Spirits that we are the Children of God, Rom. viii. 16. and thereby furnishes us with Thanksgivings. The Spirit sanctifies us, and fills us with Love, and Faith, and Humility, and every Grace that is needful in the Work of Prayer. Why then should Men take so much pains to hinder us from praying by the Spirit, when it's only by this Spirit we can walk with God, and have access to God, Eph. ii. 18.

III. The third *Argument* to prove that the Spirit of God doth sometimes assist Men in the Work of Prayer is, *the Experience of all Christians* with regard to the Grace of Prayer, and many Christians in the Exercise of the Gift of it too. The great Difference that is between some Believers and others in this respect, even where their natural Abilities are equal; and the difference that is between Believers themselves at different Times and Seasons, seems to denote the Presence or Absence of the holy Spirit. Some Persons at some special Seasons will



will break out into a divine Rapture in Prayer, and be carried far beyond themselves. Their Thoughts, their Desires, their Language, and every thing that belongs to their Prayer, seems to have something of Heaven in it.

I will allow that in some Persons this may be ascribed to a great Degree of Understanding, Invention, Fancy, Memory, and natural Affections of the Mind, and Volubility of the Tongue; but many times also it shall be observed, that those Persons who have this *Gift of Prayer* in exercise, do not excel nor equal the rest of their Neighbours in Fancy, Invention, Passion or Eloquence; it may be, they are Persons of very mean Parts, and below the common Capacity of Mankind.

Nor can it be always imputed to an overflow of animal Nature and warm Imagination, at those times when they are carried out in Prayer thus beyond themselves; for this happens sometimes when they find their natural Spirits not raised nor exalted, but the Powers of Nature labour perhaps under a Decay and great Languishings, and they can hardly speak or think about common Affairs. I wish these Testimonies to the Aids of the holy Spirit, were more frequent amongst us. And

And it may be remarked that those who despise this Gift of the holy Spirit, will deride the Persons that pretend to any share of it, as foolish, stupid, ignorant Wretches, and will represent them generally as unlearned and sottish Creatures, dull and unthinking; and yet when this Objection is made, Whence comes this Fluency? this Fervour, and this wonderful Ability of pouring out the Soul before God in Prayer, which the Scoffers themselves can't imitate? Oh then it is attributed to our Wit, our Memory, our Invention, our Fancy, our vehement Affections, our Confidence or Impudence, to any thing rather than to the *Spirit of God*, because they are resolved despitefully to oppose his Power, and deny his Work in the Hearts of Believers.

I might here add Citations from the *Articles and Liturgies* of the Church of England, to confirm the Doctrine of the Aids of the holy Spirit in our Religious Performances. *We have no Power to do good Works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the Grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a Good-will, and working with us when we have that Good-will, Art. 10. The working of the Spirit — drawing up the Mind to high and heavenly,*

*heavenly Things, Art. 17. And this ordinary Work of the holy Spirit in all Believers, is called the Inspiration of the holy Spirit, Art. 13. O God, from whom all holy Desires, all good Councils, and all just Works do proceed: Second Collect at Evening Prayer. And a little after, Almighty God, who hast given us grace to make our common Supplications. And in the Collect, the fifth Sunday after Easter — Grant that by thy holy Inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by thy merciful Guiding may perform the same. Again, Almighty God, of whose only Gift it cometh that thy faithful People do unto thee true and laudable Service, 13th Sunday after Trinity. Grant that thy holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our Hearts, 19th Sunday after Trinity. Homily 16th, p. 1, & 2. asserts the secret and mighty Working of God's holy Spirit which is within us: For it is the Holy Ghost; and no other thing, stirring up good and godly Motions in their Heart. Many more Expressions of this nature might be collected from the Homilies and publick Prayers of the Church of England: So that one would think none of that Communion should throw Reproach and Scandal upon the Assistances of the holy Spirit in good Works and religious Duties.*

SECT.

S E C T. II.

*How the Spirit assists us in Prayer.*

**I**T is evident then that there is such a thing as the *Assistance of the Spirit of God in the Work of Prayer*; but how far this Assistance extends is a further subject of Inquiry; and it is very necessary to have a just Notion of the Nature and Bounds of this divine Influence, that we may not expect more than God has promised, nor sit down negligently contented without such Degrees as may be attained.

Persons in this, as in most other cases, are very ready to run away with Extreams. They either Attribute too much or too little to the holy Spirit.

In my Judgment those Persons attribute too little to the Spirit of Prayer,

1. *Who say there is no more Assistance to be expected in Prayer, than in any ordinary and common Affair of Life, as when the Plowman breaks the Clods of his Ground, and casts in the Wheat and the Barly, his God doth instruct him to Discretion, and teach him, Isa. xxviii. 24, 25, 26.* But this is in effect to deny his special Influences.

2. *Those*



2. *Those who allow the Spirit of God merely to excite some holy Motions in the Heart while they pray, and to awaken something of Grace into Exercise, according to the Words of a Prayer, but that he does scarce any thing towards our obtaining the Ability or Gift of Praying, nor at all assists us in the Exercise of the Gift with proper Matter, Method or Expressions.*

I perswade my self the Scriptures cited in the foregoing Section, concerning *Praying in the Spirit*, can never be explain'd this way in their full meaning; and I hope to make it apparent in this Section, that the holy Spirit hath more hand in Prayer, than both these Opinions allow.

I think also on the other hand, those Persons expect too much from the Spirit in our Day,

1. *Who wait for all their Inclinations to pray from immediate and present Dictates of the Spirit of God; who will never pray but when the Spirit moves them.* I find in Scripture frequent Exhortations to pray, and Commands to pray always, i. e. to pray upon all Occasions; yet I find no Promise nor Incouragement to expect the holy Spirit will by sudden and immediate Impulses in a sensible way

Sect. 2. *assists in Prayer.* 387

way dictate to me every Season of Prayer. For tho' the Spirit of God should sometimes withdraw himself in his Influences, yet my Duty and Obligation to constant Prayer still remain.

2. *Those who expect such aids of the holy Spirit, as to make their Prayers become the proper Works of Inspiration, such as the Prayers of David and Moses, and others recorded in Scripture.* Let us not be so fond as to perswade our selves, that these Workings of the holy Spirit in Ministers, or in common Christians while they teach, or exhort, or pray, arise to the Character of those miraculous Gifts that were given to the Apostles, and primitive Believers; such as are described in the Church of *Corinth*, and elsewhere. For at those times a whole Sermon, or a whole Prayer together, was a constant impulse of the holy Spirit, perhaps for the Words as well as all the Matter of it; which made it truly Divine. But in our Prayers, the Spirit of God leaves us much to our selves, to mingle many weaknesses and defects with our Duties, both in the Matter, and in the Manner, and in the Words; so that we cannot say of one whole Sentence, that it is the perfect or the pure Work of the Spirit of God. And we should run the danger

danger of Blasphemy to entitle the Spirit of God to every thing that we speak in Prayer, as well as to exclude all his Assistances from all the Prayers of the Saints in our Day.

3. *Those who hope for such Influences of the Spirit as to render their own Study and Labours needless;* who never have given Diligence to furnish themselves in a rational way with an Ability to pray, upon Presumption of those divine Impulses; nor upon any Occasion will premeditate before-hand, but rush upon the Duty as Peter went out at Christ's Command to walk upon the Water, and hope to be upheld and carried thro' all the Duty without their own Fore-thought. They will cite the Text which was given to the Disciples, *Mat. x. 19. When they deliver you up, take no Thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same Hour what ye shall speak.* But this Text has quite another Design.

It may well be questioned, whether this Word of Christ forbids them all Premeditation, but only an anxious and solicitous Fear and Care, as we are bid to *take no Thought for the Morrow; Mat. vi. 34. i. e. be not over-sollicitous or disquieted about Provision for the Morrow.* But if Christ did utterly forbid them all Prepara-

paration, yet that Command and Promise to the Apostles in miraculous Times, when they should appear before Magistrates, can never be given to encourage the sloth and laziness of every common Christian in our Day, when he appears in worship before God.

Now in order to find the happy *Medium* between these two Extreams of attributing *too much* or *too little* to the *Spirit of Prayer*, I have diligently consulted the word of God: And so far as I am able to judge or determine, his Assistance in Prayer may be reduced to the following Particulars.

I. *He bestows upon us our natural Capacities*; some degree of Understanding, Judgment, Memory, Invention and natural Affections; some Measure of Confidence and Liberty of Speech, and readiness to utter the Conceptions of our Mind.

And this he doth to Believers in common with other Men, for *every good Gift comes from God*, James i. 17. And in a particular manner the third Person in the Trinity, the Holy Ghost, is generally represented as the Agent in such sort of Operations, especially where they relate to Religion.



II. *He Blesses our Diligence in Reading, Hearing, Meditation, Study, and Attempts of Prayer*; whereby while we attend to useful Rules and Instructions, we treasure up a store of Matter for this Duty, and learn by degrees to express our Thoughts with Propriety and Decency, to our own and others Edification. Thus he adds a Blessing to our Studies, in order to grow in the Knowledge of the things of God as Christians, and in the learning of Tongues to interpret Scripture, and in the Holy Skill of Exhortation in order to become able Ministers.

All these are called *Spiritual Gifts*, because (as is before shewn) in the primitive Times they were given on the sudden in an extraordinary Manner without laborious Study to acquire them; but in our Day these are to be obtained and improved by Labour and Use, by repeated Tryals, by Time and Experience, and the ordinary Blessing of the Spirit of God; and the same must be said concerning the *Gift of Prayer*. He sanctifies our Memory to treasure up such Parts of the Holy Scripture as are proper to be used in Prayer, he makes it faithful to retain them, and ready in the Recollection of them at proper Seasons. If Men become skillful in any Faculty, and  
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especially that belongs to Religion, it is justly attributed to God and his Spirit; for if he teaches the Plow-man to manage wisely in Sowing and Reaping, *Isaiab*, xxviii. 26, 29. much more doth he teach the Christian to pray. He divides to every one what Gifts he pleases, and works according to his good Pleasure, *1 Cor.* xii. from v. 4. to v. 11. All secondary Helps and Means when well attended to and well applyed, are made successful by his powerful Benediction. And we may say to those Christians who have the greatest Gifts in Prayer, *Who made thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou hast not received?* *1 Cor.* iv. 7. For if we live not by Bread alone, but by every word of Power and Blessing that proceeds from the Mouth of God, *Matt.* iv. 4. much more may we say concerning the spiritual Improvements of the Mind; that they are not attained by our Labour alone, but by the good Spirit of God making our Labour prosperous.

III. *He inclines our Hearts to pray; and keeps them intent upon the Work.* By Nature there is in all Men an Estrangedness from God, and there is too much of it remaining in the best. There is a natural Reluctance to the Duties of immediate Communion with

190 *How far the Spirit* Chap. IV.

with God, and a Weariness in them: 'Tis only the Spirit of God that works a heavenly Frame in us, that makes us ready to pray always, and excites us to take Occasion from the several Concerns of our Souls, or from the Affairs of Life, to go to the Mercy Seat and to abide there. It is he that kindly and secretly suggests, *Now is the accepted time.* The Spirit says to the Soul secretly, *Seek my Face,* and the Soul replies, *Thy Face, O God, will I seek.* Ps. xxvii. 8. *The Spirit saith, Come, to God by Prayer as well as to Christ by Faith,* Rev. xxii. 19. It is he that enlarges the Desires towards God, and gives silent Intimations of Audience and Acceptance. By his good Motions he overcomes our Delay, and answers the carnal Objections of our sinful and slothful Hearts. He gives our Spirits Liberty for the work as well as in it, and recalls our Thoughts when wandering from God in Worship, whether they be drawn away by our Eyes, or our Ears, or our busie Fancies, or the Suggestions of the Evil One. It is the Holy Spirit that holds us to the Duty in opposition to all Discouragements, and makes us *wrestle and strive with God in Prayer, pour out our Hearts before him, and stir up our selves to take hold of him,* agreeable to the Language

guage of those Scriptures, *Gen. xxii. 24. Rom. xv. 20. Psal. lxii. 8. Esa. lxiv. 7.* Now the Means which the Spirit of God generally uses to bring us to Prayer and keep us to the Duty, is by working in our Souls a lively Sense of the Necessity and Advantage of it, or giving us some Refreshment and Delight in and by it.

And if when we are engaged in our worldly Affairs, or in divine Worship, the Devil is permitted by sudden violent impressions on the Fancy, to draw our Hearts away to sinful Objects, why should it be counted a strange thing that the Blessed Spirit should cast in Holy Motions and Encouragements to the Duty?

IV. *He oftentimes by secret Whispers instructs us in the Matter of Prayer.* This is the express Language of Holy Scripture. *Rom. viii. 26. The Spirit helpeth our Infirmities, for we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit it self maketh Intercession for us.* — and that according to the Mind or Will of God. *v. 27.* All the Senses that the Wit of Man has contrived to put upon this Scripture to exclude the Work of the Spirit of God, are very much forced and strained to make them signify any thing else.

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292. *How far the Spirit* Chap. IV.

'Tis plain that we *know not what is good* for our selves, *Eccles. vi. 12.* and we of our selves should often ask for things hurtful to us, *James iv. 3.* We are not acquainted with our own Wants, nor the Method of our Relief. 'Tis the Spirit that must convince us of *Sin and Righteousness*, of our Sin; and the Righteousness of Christ, *John xvi. 9.* He is a Spirit of Illumination in all the Affairs of Religion: 'Tis he alone *that searches the deep Things of God*, that knows what God hath prepared for Believers, *1 Cor. ii. 9.* And therefore he *makes Intercession*, or teaches us to pray for Things agreeably to the divine Will and Purpose. He now and then also gives a hint of some Argument to plead with God; either the Name or Mediation of Christ, or some of his own Promises in the Gospel, for he is promised to *take of the Things of Christ, and show them unto us*, *John xiv. 26.* and *John xvi. 13, 14, 15.* 'Tis he that brings divine Things to our Remembrance: Such Things as are suited to the several Parts of Prayer. He sets the Glory and the Majesty of God before our Eyes, and furnishes us with Matter for Adoration: By bringing Sin to our Remembrance, he fits us for Confession. And by causing us to reflect

reflect on our many Mercies richly supplies us with Thanksgivings.

Now since the Evil Spirit is said to pluck the good *Seed of the Word* of God out of the Heart, Matt. xiii. 19. why may we not as well suppose the Good Spirit to put good Thoughts into the Heart, to prepare and furnish us for such a Duty as Prayer? And such kind of Influences as these, are called the Good Motions of the Spirit of God, which Christians of almost every Sect and Perswasion will allow in some degree.

V. *When the Spirit of God supplies us largely with Matter in Prayer, he doth in some measure Influence the Method too.*

*Method* is but the Disposition of the Materials of a Prayer one after another. Now as it is impossible our Tongues should speak all these together, so it is not possible our Minds should receive all the kind Hints of them from the Spirit at once, but successively one after another as seems good to him. Sometimes he fills our Souls with so deep and penitent a Sense of our past Sins, that we break out before God into humble Confessions in the very Beginning of Prayer. "O Lord, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? Mine Iniquities are gone over my Head, and the Number of  
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294 *How far the Spirit* Chap. IV.

“ them is Infinite. And perhaps the Soul dwells upon its Humiliations, thro’ almost all the Time of Worship.

At another time the Spirit works as the Spirit of Joy and Thanksgiving; and the first Words the Lips utter are the Language of Gratitude and Praise.

“ I thank thee, Father, Lord of Hea-  
“ ven and Earth, that tho’ the Myste-  
“ ries of the Gospel are hidden from the  
“ Wise and Prudent, yet thou hast re-  
“ vealed them unto Babes.

Sometimes the Soul is so inflam’d with Desire after such a particular Grace, or Mortification of some special Sin, that almost from every Part of Prayer, from Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, &c. it will fetch some Argument for bestowing that Mercy; and at every turn insert that special Petition, inforcing it with new Arguments and Pleadings.

Thus tho’ the beautiful Connexion of one Sentence with another, and the smooth and easie Transition from one Part of Prayer to another, be left much to our selves; yet the meer Order of those Materials which the holy Spirit gives in while we pray, will be in some degree under his Direction or Influence. And if we may understand those words of *Elihu*, in a literal Sense, *Job xxxvii. 19.*

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we have need of Assistance in Matter, Method, and every thing when we speak to God, and may well cry out, Lord, *teach us what we should say to thee, for we cannot order our Speech by reason of Darkness,* we need Light and Instruction from thee, to frame our Speeches, and to put them in order.

VI. *The Spirit may be said to give some Assistance also toward apt and proper Expression in Prayer.* For he concurs in an ordinary Way to the Exercise of our natural, and acquired Faculties of Knowledge, Memory, Vivacity of Spirit, Readiness of Speech, and holy Confidence, whereby we express those Thoughts which he hath excited in us in a becoming Manner. And this he doth also in Preaching and Conferring upon the Things of God, and this more eminently in the Work of Prayer: So that hereby a Believer is able at some times to pour out his Soul before God, with a fulness of Thought, and Variety of Expression, to the great Comfort of his own Soul, and the Edification of his Fellow-worshippers. Saint Paul speaks of this *Boldness and Utterance* as a spiritual Gift, 1 Cor. i. 5. and 2 Cor. viii. 7. And he often prayed for this *Confidence and Freedom of Speech*, this *παρρησία* in Preaching,



196 *How far the Spirit* Chap IV.

*Eph. vi. 19. Col. iv. 3, 4.* And we also have Reason to ask it of God in Prayer, for 'tis as necessary also in that Duty for carrying on the Work of Grace in our Hearts, and the Building up of the Church, the Body of Christ, for which all Gifts are given.

I might add also, That as the holy Spirit frequently by secret hints supplies us with the Matter of Prayer, he by that very means assists us toward Expression, for *Expression is but the Clothing our Thoughts or Idea's in proper Words.* Now in this State where the Soul and Body are so united, the most part of the Idea's and Conceptions of our Mind are so join'd to Words, that Words arise as it were mingled with those Idea's or Conceptions, which the holy Spirit awakens within us. And we may humbly hope, that when he hath given us some secret Whispers what we should pray for, he will at least so far enable us to use proper Expressions, as may convey the same Thoughts and Matter to those who join with us in Worship.

Especially when proper Materials of Prayer are brought to our Mind in Scripture Expressions, in some Sense these are *words which the holy Ghost teacheth,* that Spirit which is promised to bring to  
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our Remembrance things which Christ hath taught us. But this is more evidently so at that time, when together with these Expressions, the Graces of Prayer are wrought up to a lively Exercise, which is the next step of the Assistance of the Spirit.

VII. *He excites those Graces in us, which are suited to the Duty of Prayer.* He spiritualizes our natural Affections, and fixes them on proper Objects, and enlarges and heightens their Activity. When Sin is recollected he awakens Anger, Shame and Sorrow. When God is revealed to the Mind in his Glory and Justice, he overspreads the Soul with holy Awe and humble Fear. When the Lord *Jesus Christ* and his Redemption are upon the Thoughts, the holy Spirit warms and raises our Desire and Love. We are in our selves cold and dead to spiritual Things, he makes us lively in Prayer, and holds us to the Work; he begets a holy Reverence of God while we adore him; he works in us Delight in God, and longing Desires after him; Fervency and Importunity in our Petitions for spiritual Mercies; Submission and Resignation to the Will of God in temporal Things; Faith in our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and Hope in the Promises of the Gospel, while we plead

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198 *How far the Spirit* Chap. IV.

with God for an Answer to our Prayers; he fills us also with holy Joy and Exultation in God, while we recollect in Prayer, his Glories, or his Benefits, and awakens all the Springs of Thankfulness. As these Qualities in their first Operation are attributed to the Spirit of God, which is not my present Business to prove, so in their constant Exercise in every Duty they want his further Assistance and Efficacy, since of our selves, an Apostle could say, *we are not sufficient for one good Thought*, 1 Cor. iii. 5. *but all our sufficiency is of God*; 'tis God of his good Pleasure worketh in us both to will, and to do, Phil. ii. 13. He gives us sincere Aims and Designs, in our Petitions; for as to the Manner of our Prayers, there is the Assistance of the Spirit necessary as well as to the Matter, and 'tis hinted in the Text before cited, *Rom. viii. 26. We know not what to pray for, as we ought, but the Spirit helpeth us.* He influences our Minds with a true and upright Aim at the Glory of God, and our Salvation, for otherwise we are ready to ask good Things amiss, that we may spend them on our Lusts, James iv. 3.

This work of the Spirit in awakening our Graces (tho' it be mentioned last) yet it often begins before the Prayer, and pre-

precedes his other Influences or our own Labour, in speaking to God.

Thus have I delivered my Sentiments at large concerning the *Extent of the Influences of the Spirit of God in Prayer*, and have shown how he qualifies us habitually for Prayer, actually disposes and prepares us for it, and gives us present Assistance in it. And after all I would say, that the most considerable and common Assistance in Prayer, which is peculiarly attributed to the Blessed Spirit as a *Spirit of Prayer*, and may be expected from him in our Day, consists chiefly in this; the putting our Souls into a praying Frame, the stirring up Holy Motions and Breathings after God, giving secret Hints of our real Wants, and of Arguments and Promises to plead with God, awakening the Graces of Love, Fear, Hope and Joy, that are suited to this Duty; and 'tis chiefly upon this Account that he is called a *Spirit of Grace and Supplication*. When these are raised to a high Degree, the Heart will have a natural Influence upon the Invention, the Memory, the Language, and the Voice. *Out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth will speak.* And for the most part, the Utterance will be proportionable to the Degree of inward Affection, and to the natural and acquired Abilities



of the Person that prays; excepting some rare and glorious Instances where Men are carried beyond themselves, by the uncommon Presence of the Divine Spirit.

I might venture upon this Subject to *make an Address to those Persons who will entertain nothing in Religion, but what appears agreeable to Principles of Reason and Philosophy,* and yet have taken Liberty to scoff at *Divine Assistances in the Duty of Prayer.* Let me intreat you, Sirs, to tell me what is there in this Doctrine that is unreasonable to assert, or unbecoming a Philosopher to believe? If the Great God has required every Man to pray, and will hear and reward the humble and sincere Worshipper, why may we not suppose he is so compassionate as to help us in this Work which he requires? Is not he full of Goodness, and ready to accept those Sinners that return to him? and why shall not the same Goodness incline him to assist those that desire and attempt a Return? Why may he not by secret Impressions draw out further the Desires of that Soul that already Breaths after him, when he sees the Spirit willing and feeble, and thus sweetly encourage the Worship he delights in, and prepare his Servants for his own Reward?

*This*

*This Address may be repeated to Christians that profess the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity with much more Force and Argument.*

Do you believe the Almighty God sent his own Son to teach us how to pray, and when we are taught the right way, why may not his own Spirit assist in the Performance? Hath *Jesus Christ* purchased Heaven for us, and may not the Spirit be permitted to incline us to ask for that Heaven, and awaken our Desires to seek it? When the Son of God saw us perishing in Guilt and Misery, did he descend and relieve and save us by dying for us? and when the Spirit of God beholds a poor Creature willing to receive this Relief and Salvation, and yet is afraid to venture into the Presence of an offended God, why may he not give secret hints of Incouragement, and draw out the Addresses of the Heart and Lips to a God that is willing to pardon? When he sees a humble Sinner labouring and striving to break thro' Temptations, to lay aside vain Thoughts, to put carnal things far away from the Mind, and to converse with God alone, why may he not impress some divine Thoughts upon him, stir up devout and strong Affections, make him surmount his Difficulties, and raise him a little towards his heavenly Father? since he has given him

Faculties of Memory, Invention and Speech; why may not he assist those Faculties when directed toward himself, and make them swifter and warmer in their advances toward God? To what purpose is the Blessed Spirit mentioned so often in the New Testament as one that helps forward the Salvation of Men, to what purpose does he sustain so many Characters and Offices in Scripture, and to what End is he so often promised to Christians to be with them and dwell in them as a most glorious Blessing of the Gospel, if he be not permitted to do so much as this in assisting Men to draw near to their Maker, and helping the Children of God on Earth to converse with their Father which is in Heaven? Now if such Condescensions as these are not unworthy of the blessed God, why should it be unworthy of a Man or a Christian to believe them and hope for them?

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### S E C T. III.

#### *Cautions about the Influences of the Spirit.*

**T**HERE are many practical Cases that arise upon this Subject of the Assistance of the Spirit in Prayer, which exercise the Thoughts of honest and pious

Sect. 3. *the Spirit's Influence.* 203

pious Persons. It is not my Purpose here to enlarge in this way; yet that I may prevent or obviate some Difficulties, I would lay down these few *Cautions*.

I. First Caution. *Do not believe all manner of Impulses or urgent Impressions of Mind to go and pray, proceed always from the Blessed Spirit.*

Sometimes the meer *Terrors of Conscience* awaken'd under Sense of Guilt and Danger, will urge a natural Man to go to Prayer. So the Sailors in *Jonah's Ship*, when surpris'd with a Storm, each of them fell a praying. Tho' the Spirit of God in his own Operations makes much use of the Consciences of Men to carry on his own Work, yet when these inward *Impulses to pray* arise meerly from some affrighting Providence or sudden Conviction, and Torment of Mind, and thus drag us into the Presence of God, without any Assistance and Strength to perform the Duty, and without much regard to the Success of the Duty, we may justly fear the Holy Spirit of God hath not much hand in such Impulses; for he both assists in the Duty, and makes us solicitous about the Success of it.

Sometimes *Satan* himself may so far transform himself into an *Angel of Light* as to hurry and impell a Person to go and pray.  
But



But his Impulses are generally violent and unseasonable. When we are engaged in some other Business that is the proper Duty of that Season, he tyrannically commands in a Moment to leave all and go aside and pray. But the Spirit of God draws us to God at a fit Season, so as never to thrust out another necessary Duty toward God, or toward Men. He is a God of Order, and his Spirit always excites us to the proper Duty of the Hour; wherefore *Satan* would but divert us from one Business by forcing us away to another, and then leave us to our own Weakness in it, and vex us afterward with Accusations.

II. Second Caution. *Do not expect the Influences of the Spirit of Prayer should be so vehement and sensible, as certainly to distinguish them from the Motions of your own Spirits;* for the Spirit of God generally acts toward his People, agreeable to the Dispensation under which they are, either in a more sensible, or a more imperceptible Way.

*Under the old Testament* the Spirit of God often carried the Prophets away, as if it were in an Extase beyond themselves; their Style, their Gesture, as well as inward Commotions of Heart, were frequently different from the common man-

*Sect. 3. the Spirit's Influence. 205*

ner of Men, and did sufficiently evidence to themselves, and in some Measure to others also, that they were under the Impressions of the Holy Spirit at special Seasons.

*Under the new Testament* the Apostles had a more constant and habitual Assistance of the Spirit, tho' it was extraordinary also; and in a calmer way were influenced in Prayer and Preaching more agreeable to rational Nature; tho' without doubt they themselves well knew when they were under the certain Conduct of the Holy Spirit.

*In our Day* when we have not Reason to expect extraordinary Inspirations, the Spirit of God usually leads us in so soft and silent a Manner, agreeable to the Temper of our own Spirits, and concurrent Circumstances of Life, that his Workings are not to be easily distinguish'd by our selves or others, from the rational Motions of our own Hearts, influenced by moral Arguments; tho' by the holy Tendency, and the sanctifying Effects, we know we had some Assistance from the Blessed Spirit.

Such are his Operations generally in Conversion, Sanctification and Consolation; he works so conaturally and sweetly with our own Spirits that we can-

cannot certainly distinguish his Working by any vehemence or strength of Impression; but it is best known by the savour and relish of Divine Things that we then feel in our Souls, and by consequent Fruits of Sanctification in our Hearts and Lives.

**III. Third Caution.** *Tho' we have not any sure Ground to expect extraordinary Influences from the Spirit of Prayer in our Day, yet we ought not to deny them utterly;* for God hath no where bound himself not to bestow them: The chief Ends for which immediate Inspirations were given are long ceased among us where the Gospel is so well establish'd, yet there have not been wanting Instances in every Age of some extraordinary Testimonies of the Spirit of God to the Truth of the Gospel, both for Conviction of Unbelievers, and for the Instruction, Incouragement and Consolation of his own People.

In the *Conversion of a Sinner*, the Spirit's work is usually gradual, and begun and carried on by Providences, Sermons, occasional Thoughts and moral Arguments from Time to Time, 'till at last the Man is become a new Creature, and resolves heartily to give up himself to Christ according to the Incouragements of the Gospel. Yet there

Sect. 3. *the Spirit's Influence.* 207

there are now and then some surprizing and sudden Conversions wrought by the over-powering Influences of the Holy Spirit, something like the Conversion of Saint Paul.

In the *Consolation of Saints*, the Spirit generally assists their own Minds in comparing their Hearts with the Rule of the Word, and makes it appear they are the Children of God, by finding the Characters of Adoption in themselves; this is his ordinary Way of Witnessing; but there are Instances when the Spirit of God hath in a more immediate Manner spoken Consolation, and constrain'd the poor trembling Believer to receive it: And this hath been evidenced to be Divine, by the Humility and advancing Holiness that hath followed upon it.

So it is in *Prayer*. The ordinary Assistances of the Spirit, given in our Day to Ministers, or private Christians in their utmost Extent, imply no more than what I have described in the foregoing Chapter: But there are Instances wherein the Spirit of God hath carried a devout Person in Worship far beyond his own natural and acquired Powers in the Exercise of the *Gift of Prayer*, and raised him to an uncommon and exalted Degree of the Exercise of *praying Graces*,  
very



very near to those divine Impulses which the primitive Christians enjoy'd.

If a Minister in a publick Assembly has been enabled to make his Addresses to God with such a Flow of divine Eloquence, and spread the Cases of the whole Assembly before the Lord, in such expressive Language, that almost every one present hath been ready to confess, *surely he knew all my Heart*; if they have all felt something of a Divine Power attending his Words, drawing their Hearts near to the Throne, and giving them a Taste of Heaven; if Sinners have been converted in Numbers, and Saints have been made triumphant in Grace, and received blessed Advances toward Glory, I would not be afraid to say, " Surely " God is in this place present with the " *extraordinary Power and Influence of his " Spirit.*

If a Christian hath been taught by this Spirit making Intercession in him to plead with God for some particular Mercy in such an unwonted Strain of humble and heavenly Argument, that he has found in himself secret and inward Assurances that the Mercy should be bestow'd by something of a prophetic Impulse, and has never been mistaken, if Grace has been in vigorous

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Sect. 3. *the Spirit's Influence.* 209

Exercise in the Prayer, and afterward the Success has always answer'd his Expectation; I should not forbear to believe the *extraordinary Presence of the Spirit of Prayer* with him at that Season. Dr. Winter in Ireland, and several Ministers and private Christians of the last Age in Scotland, are notable and glorious Instances of this gracious *Appearance of the Holy Spirit*.

If a serious and humble Worshipper, that hath been long seeking after the Knowledge of some divine Truth, should find himself enlighten'd upon his Knees, with a Beam of Heav'nly Light shining upon that Truth with most peculiar Evidence, and teaching him more in one Prayer than he had learn'd by Months of Labour and Study, I should venture to acknowledge the *immediate Aids and Answers of the Spirit of Prayer and Illumination*. Luther is said to have enjoy'd such divine Favours at the Reformation of the Church from *Popish* Darkness.

If a holy Soul hath been conflicting with Doubts and Fears, and waiting upon God in all his appointed Ways of Grace, seeking Consolation and Assurance of the Love of God; if while he hath been at the Throne of Grace, he  
has

has beheld God as his God smiling and reconciled, and as it were seen the Work of God on his own Heart in a bright and convincing Light, and perhaps by some comfortable Word of Scripture impress on his Thoughts, hath been assured of his Love to God, and the Love of God to him, if from that immediate Sensation of Divine Love he has been filled with *Joy unspeakable and full of Glory*, as well as warm'd with heavenly Zeal for the Honour of God, his God and Father, I must believe such a one to be sealed as a Child of God by the *sweet Influence of the Spirit of Adoption*, reaching him to pray and cry, *Abba, Father.*

But concerning such Workings of the Spirit of God as these are, because there have been many vain and foolish Pretences to them, I would make three Remarks.

1. These are rare Instances, and bestowed by the Spirit of God in so sovereign and arbitrary a Manner, according to the secret Counsels of his own Wisdom, that no particular Christian hath any sure Ground to expect them. Tho' I'm perswaded there are many more Instances of them in secret, among pious and

Sect. 3. *the Spirit's Influence.* 211

and humble Souls than ever came to publick Notice.

2. They are best judged of and distinguish'd from the meer Effects of a warm Fancy, and from the Spirit of Delusion, not so much by the Brightness and Vehemence of the present Impression, as by their Agreeableness to the standing Rule of the Word of God, and their Influence toward Humility and growing Holiness. There is therefore the same Rule to judge of the *Uncommon*, as well as the *common Assistances* of this Spirit of Supplication.

3. How near soever these rare and extraordinary Impulses come to the Inspiration of the Apostles and first Christians in *the Truth and Power* of them, yet they fall far short in *the distinct Evidence*: For the Spirit of God hath not taught us so far to distinguish any particular Parts or Paragraphs, even of such an extraordinary Prayer, as that any one can say, *These are perfect divine Inspiration*; because he would have nothing stand in Competition with his written Word, as the Rule of Faith and Practice of his Saints.

IV. Fourth Caution: *Do not make the Gift of Prayer, the Measure of your Judgment concerning the Spirit of Prayer.*  
IF



If we follow this Rule, there are three Cases where we may be led into Mistake.

First Case is, *when the Gift is in great and lively Exercise.* Have a Care of believing, that all those Persons pray by the Spirit, who pronounce very pious Expressions with great seeming Fervency, and much Volubility of Speech; when (it may be) their Behaviour and Character in the World is sinful and abominable in the Sight of God. It is true indeed, the Spirit of God sometimes bestows considerable Gifts upon Persons that are unconverted; but we are not immediately to believe that every thing that is bright and beautiful is the peculiar Work of the Spirit in our Day, unless we have some Reason to hope the Person is also one of the Sons of God.

Much less can we suppose that noisie Gesture, a distorted Countenance, Violence and Vociferation are any Signs of the Presence of the divine Spirit; sometimes indeed the extraordinary Anguish of Mind, or inward Fervour of Affection, have extorted from the Saints of God loud Complaints and Groanings. *David* sometimes practised this, as appears in his *Psalms*. *Jesus Christ* himself, when prest with Sorrows heavier than Man could

Sect. 3. *the Spirit's Influence.* 213

could bear, *offer'd strong Crys and Tears in the Days of his Flesh*, Heb. v. 7. and we are sure the Spirit of Prayer was with him. But there may be great Noise, and violent Commotions used to make a show of Fervency and Power, and with a Design to make up the want of inward Devotion. God himself was indeed present at Sinai with *Thunder and Lightning*, and the *Sound of a Trumpet* once, *Exod. xix.* But another time when he came down to visit *Elijah*, he was *not in the Earthquake, nor in the Tempest, but in the still small Voice*, 1 Kings xix.

I would not impute the Difference betwixt the Prayers of one Minister and another, one Christian and another, meerly to the Presence or Absence of the holy Spirit. Natural Constitutions, Capacities, Acquirements, natural Affections, and providential Circumstances can make a great Difference. Nor would I impute the Difference that is betwixt the Prayers of the same true Christians at different Seasons only, to the unequal Assistances of the blessed Spirit; for many other things may concur to make them more or less cold or fervent, dull or lively in the Exercise of the Gift of Prayer.

2. The *second Case* wherein we may be in danger of Mistake is, *Where there is but a small Measure of the Gift of Prayer.* How ready are some Persons to judge the Spirit of Prayer is absent from the Heart of that Person that speaks to God, if he hath but a mean and contemptible Gift; if he seems to repeat the same Things over again, if he labours under want of Words, or expresses his Thoughts in improper or disagreeable Language, if he hath no Beauty of Connexion betwixt his Sentences, and hath little Order or Method in the several Parts of Prayer. Now, tho' such Persons that have so very small and despicable a Talent should not be forward to speak in Prayer in a great Assembly, or among Strangers, 'till by Practice in a more private Way they have attained more of this holy Skill; yet there may be much of the Spirit of Prayer in the Hearts of some such Persons as these.

It may be they are young Christians lately converted, and are but beginning to learn to pray. The Business of Praying is a new Work to them, tho' their Zeal be warm, and their Hearts lively in Grace. And natural Bashfulness may sometimes hinder the Exercise of a good Gift in Prayer.

Or

Or it may be they have very low natural Parts, a poor Invention and Memory, a bareness of Words, or some Difficulty or Unhappiness in their common way of expressing themselves about other Affairs; they may be some of those *foolish things of this World that God hath called to the Knowledge of his Son*, and filled their Hearts with rich Grace; but Grace doth not so far exalt Nature, as to change a dull Genius and low Capacity into a Sprightliness of Thought and Vivacity of Language.

Or perhaps they have long disused themselves from praying in Publick, and at first when they are called to it again they may be much at a loss as to the Gift of Prayer, tho' Grace may be in its advances in the Soul.

Or perhaps they are in the lively Exercise of deep Humility and Mourning before God under Sense of Guilt, or overwhelmed with fears of divine Desertion, or conflicting and wrestling hard with some hurrying Temptation, or under a present depression of Mind by some heavy Sorrow, and may be in the case of *David, Psalm lxxvii. 4.* when he was *so troubled that he could not speak.*

Or finally, God may with-hold from them the Exercise of the Gift of Prayer,



er to punish them with Shame and Confusion for some neglected Duty, and chastises them (it may be) for Carelessness in seeking after this Holy Skill of speaking to God, tho' some Graces, such as Zeal and Love, may be at work in the Heart.

Sometimes it may happen that the *Spirit of Prayer* is communicated in a great degree to a humble Christian who falls into many thoughtless Indecencies of Gesture in Prayer, or delivers his Sentences with a most unhappy Tone of Voice: Perhaps he was never taught to practise Decency when he was young, and such ill Habits are not easily cured afterward. We are not therefore to despise and be offended at all such Prayers, but endeavour to separate what is pious and divine from the human Frailty and Weakness; to pity such Persons heartily, and be so much the more excited ourselves to seek after every thing that is agreeable in the Gift of Prayer.

III. The *Third Case*, wherein we are in danger of Mistake, is, *When the Gift is not exercised at all*. Some Persons have been ready to imagine they could not pray by the Spirit but when they exercised the Gift of Prayer themselves; But this is a great Mistake. For tho'

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Sect. 3. *the Spirit's Influence.* 217.

one Person be the Mouth of the rest to God, yet every one that joins with him may be justly said to *pray in the Spirit*, if all the Graces that are suited to the Duty of Prayer, and to the Expressions that are then used, are found in Exercise and lively Vigour. And 'tis possible that a poor humble Christian may pray in the Spirit in the secret and silence of his Heart, while the Person that speaks to God in the Name of others hath very little or nothing of the Spirit of God with him, or when the Words of the Prayer are a known and prescribed Form. Tho' the *Spirit of Prayer* in the common Language of Christians is never apply'd to the exercise of the Gift where there is no Grace, yet 'tis often apply'd to the exercise of the Grace of Prayer without any regard to the Gift.

V. Fifth Caution. *Do not expect the same measures of Assistance at all times from the Spirit of Prayer.* He has no where bound himself to be always present with his People in the same degree of Influence, tho' he will never utterly forsake those of whose Hearts he has taken Possession as his Temple and Residence. He is compar'd to the Wind by our Lord Jesus Christ, John iii. *The Wind blows where and when it listeth, and is not al-*

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218 *Directions to obtain* Chap. IV.

ways equal in the strength of its Gales, nor constant in blowing on the same part of the Earth. The Holy Spirit is a Sovereign and free Agent, and dispenses his Favours in what Measures he pleaseth, and at what Seasons he will.

Those therefore that enjoy at present a large share of Assistance from the Spirit of Prayer, should not presume upon it that they shall always enjoy the same. Those that have in any measure lost it should not despair of recovering it again; and those that have not yet been blest with his Influences, may humbly hope to attain them by seeking; and this naturally leads me to the following Section.

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S E C T. IV.

*Directions to obtain and keep the Spirit of Prayer.*

THE last thing I propos'd is to give some *Directions* how to obtain and to keep the Assistance of the Holy Spirit; and they are such as these.

1. *Seek earnestly after converting Grace and Faith in Jesus Christ.* For the Spirit of Grace and of Supplication dwells in Believers

Sect. 4. *the Spirit of Prayer.* 219

Believers only. He may visit others as he is the Author of some spiritual Gifts, but he abides only with the Saints. The Sons of God are so many *Temples of his Holy Spirit*, 1 Cor. iij. 16. and he perfumes their Souls with the sweet Incense of Prayer ascending up from their Hearts to God who dwells in Heaven. If we are in the *Flesh*, that is, in an unconverted State, we cannot please God, nor walk in the Spirit, nor pray in the Spirit. Rom. viii. 8, 9. 'Tis only the Children of God that receive his Spirit as a Spirit of Adoption, Rom. viii. 15. *Because ye are Sons, he hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your Hearts*, and 'tis by Faith in Christ Jesus that we receive this Spirit, Gal. iii. 14. And wheresoever he is the Spirit of all Grace, he will in some measure be a Spirit of Prayer too.

Let all Christians therefore that wou'd maintain and increase in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit live much by the Faith of the Son of God, be frequent in Acts of Dependence upon Christ Jesus: For the Spirit is given to him without measure, and in all fulness, that from his fulness we may derive every Gift and every Grace. John iii. 34. and John i. 16. As in the natural so in the spiritual or mystical Body, the Spirits that give life and activity to the



220 *Directions to obtain* Chap. IV.

Heart and Tongue, and to all the Members, are deriv'd from the Head. He that lives in Heaven as our Intercessor and Advocate to present our Addresses and Petitions to the Throne, will send his own Spirit down to Earth to assist us in drawing them up. Live much upon him therefore as your Intercessor and your vital Head.

2. Give all diligence to acquire this Gift or holy Skill, according to the Directions concerning the Matter, Method and Manner of Prayer, which have been laid down before; and be much in the practice of Prayer both in secret and with one another, that young Habits may grow and be improv'd by Exercise. The Spirit of God will come and bless the Labours of the Mind towards the acquiring of Spiritual Gifts. Timothy is commanded to give attendance to reading, to meditation, on the Things of God, and to give himself wholly up to the Work, that his profiting may appear to all, though he receiv'd Gifts by Inspiration. 1 Tim. iv. 3. compar'd with ver. 14, 15. And 2 Tim. i. 6. And much more shou'd we do it who are not thus inspir'd.

Tho' Prophecy was a Gift of immediate Inspiration, yet there were of old the Schools of the Prophets, or the College,

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Sect. 4. *the Spirit of Prayer.* 221

in which young Men were trained up in the Study of Divine things, that they might be the better prepared to receive the *Spirit of Prophecy*, and use and improve it better. And these were called the *Sons of the Prophets*. 2 Kings vi. 1. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 22. St. Paul labour'd and strove with his natural Powers, while the Spirit wrought mightily in him, Col. i. 29.

Do not imagine your selves to be in danger of *quenching the Spirit*, by endeavouring to furnish your selves with Matter or Expressions of Prayer; for the Spirit of God usually works in, and by the use of Means. As in the things of Nature so in the things of Grace, 'tis a true and Divine Proverb; *the Soul of the Sluggard desireth and hath not, but the Soul of the Diligent shall be made fat*, Prov. xiii. 4. We are to put forth our best Efforts, and then hope for divine Assistance, for the *Spirit of God helps together with us*, *συναντιλαμβάνει* (ve), Rom. viii. 26. As if a Man should take hold of one end of a Burden in order to raise it, and some mighty Helper should make his Labour effectual, by raising it up at the other end, and fulfilling the Design. It was the Encouragement which David gave his Son Solomon, 1 Chron. xxii. 16. *Arise and be doing, and the Lord shall be with thee*. While we are stirring  
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222 *Directions to obtain* Chap. IV.

up our selves to obey the Command of God and seek his Face, we have Reason to hope his Spirit will strengthen us to this Obedience, and assist us in seeking. As when God commanded Ezekiel to arise and stand upon his Feet, and bid him put forth his natural Powers towards raising himself, *The Spirit entered into him, and set him upon his Feet, and by a Divine Power made him stand.* Ezek. iii. 1, 2.

3. *Pray earnestly, and hope for the promised Spirit as a Spirit of Prayer.* Depend not upon all your natural or acquired Abilities, what glorious Attainments soever you enjoy. How have some Persons been shamefully disappointed, when they have ventur'd presumptuously to make their Addressees to God by the meer strength of their own Wit, and Memory, and Confidence? What Hurry and Confusion of Thought have they fallen into, and been incapable to proceed in the Duty? *The Holy Spirit shall be given to them that ask aright, Luke xi. 13.* Plead the Promises of Christ with Faith in his Name, *John xiv. 16, 17.* For he has promised in his own Name and in his Father's, to send his Holy Spirit.

4. *Quench not the Spirit of Prayer by confining your selves to any set Forms whatsoever.* Though the Spirit of God may be present,

Sect. 4. *the Spirit of Prayer.* 223

sent, and assist in the exercise of Grace, while we use Forms of Prayer, yet let us have a Care how we stifle or restrain any Holy Motions, or good Desires, and heavenly Affections, that are stirred up in our Hearts when we pray. If we refuse to express them, because we will not vary from the Form that is written down before us, we run a great Risque of *grieving the Holy Spirit*, and causing him to depart from us as he is the Spirit of Grace; and we effectually hinder our selves from his Assistance in the Gift of Prayer.

While you borrow the best aids in your Devotion from those Prayers that are edited by the Spirit of God in Scripture, take care and quench not his further Operations, by confining your selves entirely to those Words and Expressions. The Holy Spirit may be quenched, even by tying your selves to his own Words; for, if he had thought those Words of Scripture All-sufficient for all the Designs and Wants of his Saints in Prayer, he would have given some hint of it in his Word; he would have required us to use those Prayers always; and there would have been no further Promise of the Spirit to assist us in this Work; but now he has promised it, and has forbid us to quench

*the Holy Spirit.* L. 4. *to the Spirit.*



224 *Directions to obtain.* Chap. IV.

it, while we pray without ceasing. 1 Thes. v. 17, 18, 19.

5. *Dare not to indulge your selves in a course of Spiritless Worship, in a round of Formality, and Lip-Services, without pious Dispositions and warm Devotion in your own Spirits.* There may be danger of this Formality and Coldness even in the exercise of the Gift of Prayer when we are not tyed to a Form. And how can we think the Spirit of God will come to our Assistance, if our Spirits withdraw and are absent from the Work.

Take notice of the Frame of your Minds in Prayer, observe the Presence or Absence of this divine Assistant, the Holy Spirit; and since ye are bid to *pray always in the Spirit*, Ephes. vi. 18. be not satisfied with any one Prayer, where ye have found nothing at all of inward divine Breathings towards God through the work of his own Spirit. O the Dismal Character and Temper of those Souls, that pass whole Years of Worship, and multiply Duties and Forms of Devotion, without End and without Number, and no Spirit in them!

6. *Be thankful for every Aid of the Spirit of God in Prayer, and improve it well.* Spread all the Sails of your Soul to improve every Gale of this Heavenly Wind that blows

*Sect. 4. the Spirit of Prayer.* 225

*blows when and where it listeth, John iii. 8. Comply with his holy Breathings and spiritual Motions. Abide in Prayer when you feel your Graces raised into a lively Exercise, for it is the Spirit that quickneth, John vi. 63. He doth not always come in a sensible Manner, therefore be tenderly careful, lest you shake him off, or thrust him from the Doors of your Hearts, especially if he be a rare Visiter.*

*7. Have a care of Pride and Self-sufficiency, when at any time you feel great Enlargements of Soul in Prayer, with warm Affections, and divine Delight. Attribute not to your selves what is due to God, lest he be provoked. The Gift of Prayer in a lively and flowing Exercise, will be in danger of puffing up the unwary Christian; but let us remember, that 'tis with the humble that God will dwell, Esa. lvii. 15. and to the humble he giveth more Grace, Jam. iv. 6.*

*8. Grieve not the Holy Spirit in the Course of your Conversation in the World. Walk according to the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh, nor make him depart grieved, Ephes. iv. 29. Harken to the Whispers of the Spirit of God when he convinces of Sin, and comply with his secret Dictates when he leads to*

226 *Directions to obtain* Chap. IV.

Duty, especially the Duty of Prayer at fit Times and Seasons; Grieve him not by your Unwatchfulness, or by wilful Sins; Resist him not lest he remove; but rather seek greater Degrees of his enlightning and sanctifying Influences. If you thrust him utterly away from you in the World, he will not take it well at your Hands, nor vouchsafe you his Presence in the Closet, or in the Church. If you grieve him before Men, he will withdraw from you when you would come near to God, and leave your Souls in Grief and Bitterness. Deal kindly with him therefore, when he comes to make a Visit of Conviction to your Consciences, and to direct and incline you even to difficult and self-denying Duties. Value his Presence as a Spirit of Knowledge and Sanctification, and he will not forsake you as a Spirit of Prayer. Live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, and then you shall also pray in the Spirit.

Thus have I given short and plain *Directions* how the Assistances of the Holy Spirit may be obtained according to the Encouragements of the Word of God, and the Experience of praying Christians: For tho' he be a Sovereign and free Agent, and his Communications are of pure Mercy, so that we can pretend

Sect. 4. *The Spirit of Prayer.* 217

no Merit, yet the Spirit of God has so far condescended as to give Promises of his own Presence to those that seek it in the Way prescribed.

I would not finish this Section without a word of Advice to those from whom the Spirit of Prayer is in a great Measure with-drawn, in order to their Recovering of his wonted Assistance.

1. Be deeply sensi<sup>le</sup> of the greatness of your Loss, mourn over his Absence, and lament after the Lord. Recollect the times when you could pour out your whole Heart before God in Prayer, with a rich Plenty of Expressions and lively Graces; compare those shining Hours with the dull and dark Seasons of Retirement which you now complain of. Go and mourn before your God, and say, "How  
" vigorous were all the Powers of my  
" Nature heretofore in Worship? how  
" warm my Love? how fervent my  
" Zeal? how over-flowing was my Re-  
" pentance? and how joyful my Thank-  
" givings and Praises? But now what a  
" Coldness hath seiz'd my Spirit? how  
" dry and dead is my Heart, and how  
" far off from God and Heaven, even  
" while my Knees are bow'd before him  
" in secret? How long, O Lord, how  
" long e'er thou return again?" Have a  
care



228 *Directions to obtain* Chap. IV.

care of being satisfied with a Circle and Course of Duties, without the Life, Power and Pleasure of Religion. The Spirit of God will come and revisit the Mourners, *Jer. xxxi. 20.* When God heard *Ephraim* bemoaning himself, he turn'd his Face toward him with Compassion.

2. *Look back and remark the Steps whereby the Spirit of God withdrew himself, and search after the Sins that provoked him to depart.* He is not wont to go away and leave his Saints, except they grieve him.

See if you cannot find some sensual Iniquity indulged. He hates this, for he is a Spirit of Purity. *David* might well fear after his scandalous Sin, that God would take away his Holy Spirit from him; *Psal. li. 11.*

Recollect, if you have not rush'd upon some presumptuous Sin, and run counter to your own Light and Knowledge: This is a sure way to make him withdraw his favourable Presence.

Ask your Conscience, whether you have not resisted this blessed Spirit, when he hath brought a word of Conviction, or Command, or Reproof, to your Soul. Whether you have not refused to obey some holy Influence, and been heedless of his kind Motions in any Duty of  
Wor-

Sect. 4. *the Spirit of Prayer.* 229

Worship; this highly deserves his Re-  
sentment and Departure.

Reflect whether you have not absent-  
ed your self sinfully from your Closet  
often, or often left it, almost as soon  
as you came to it, from a prevailing  
Carnality of Mind, and sinful Weariness  
of Duty; and often shuffled off the  
Work like a tiresome Task, because you  
fancy'd the World called you; it is no  
wonder then if the Spirit of Prayer ab-  
sent himself from your Closet, even when  
the World gives you leave to go thither.  
And you may expect also, that if you  
decline *secret* Prayer, the Spirit will not  
always attend you in *publick*.

Consider whether you have not grown  
proud and vain in Gifts and Attainments,  
and thus the holy Spirit hath been pro-  
vok'd to leave you to your self, to shew  
you your own Weakness and Insuffici-  
ency, and to abase your Pride.

Cry earnestly to him, and beg that he  
would discover his own Enemy, which  
hath given him so just Offence: And  
when you have found it out, bring it,  
and slay it before the Lord. Confess the  
Sin before him with deep Humiliation  
and Self-abasement; abhor, renounce  
and abandon it for ever. Bring it to the  
Cross of Christ for Pardon, and there let  
it

230 *Directions to obtain* Chap. IV.

it be crucify'd and put to Death. Cry daily for Strength against it from Heaven, renew your Engagements to be the Lord's, and to walk more watchfully before him.

3. *Remember how you obtain'd the Spirit of Prayer at first: Read over all the foregoing Directions, and put them all a-fresh in Practice.*

Was it by Faith in Christ Jesus that the Spirit was first received? then by renew'd Acts of Faith in Christ seek his return; it is he who first gives, and he who restores this glorious Gift.

Was it in the way of Labour, Duty and Diligence, that you found the Spirit's first Assistance? then stir up all the Powers of your Soul to the same Diligence in Duty; and strive and labour to get near to the Throne of God, with utmost Exercise of your natural Abilities, depending on his secret Influences, and hoping for his return. If the Wind blow not, tugg harder at the Oar, and so make your way toward Heaven. Dare not indulge a Neglect of Prayer, upon Pretence that the Spirit is departed; for you cannot expect he should revisit you without stirring up your Soul to seek him.

Was

Sect. 4. *the Spirit of Prayer.* 235

Was he given you more sensibly as an Answer to Prayer at first? then plead earnestly with God again to restore him: If he furnish you not with Matter of Prayer by his special and present Influences, *take with you words* from his own holy Book, and say to him, *Take away all iniquity,* and return and receive me graciously, Hos. xiv. 1----4. Plead with him his own Promises made to returning Backsliders, Jer. iii. 22. Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 31, 37. and put him in Mind of the repenting Prodigal in the Embraces of his Father.

When you have found him, hold him fast, and never let him go, Sol. Song iii. 4. Dare not again indulge those Follies that provoked his Anger and Absence. Entertain his first Appearances with great Thankfulness and holy Joy: Let him abide with you, and maintain all his Sovereignty within you, and see that you abide in him in all Subjection. Walk humbly, and *Sin no more least a worse thing befall you*; lest he depart again from you, and fill your Spirit with Fear and Bondage, and make you to possess the bitter Fruit of your Folly; lest he give you up to Months and Years of Darkness, and that Measure of the Gift of Prayer you had attain'd should be so strangely  
impr-



imprison'd and bound up, that you may be hardly able to pray at all.



## CHAP. V.

### *A Persuasive to learn to Pray.*

**I**T is to little purpose that the *Nature of Prayer* is explained, that so many *Rules* are framed, and *Directions* given to teach Persons this *divine Skill of Prayer*, if they are not perswaded of the *Necessity and Usefulness* of it. I would therefore finish these *Institutions* by leaving some *perswasive Arguments* on the *Mind of the Readers*, that this *Attainment* is worth their seeking.

I am not going to address my self to those Persons, who through a *Neglect* of serious Religion have arisen to the *Insolence of Scoffing* at all Prayers besides *Publick Divine Services* and *Authorized Forms*: Nor am I now seeking to perswade those who may have some taste of serious Piety, but by a *superstitious and obstinate Veneration* of *Liturgies* have for ever abandon'd all thoughts of learning to Pray.

Chap. V. *to learn to Pray.* 233

I think there is enough in the *second* Chapter of this Treatise to convince impartial Men, that the *Gift of Prayer* is no Enthusiastical Pretence, no Insignificant *Cant* of a particular Party; but an useful and necessary Qualification for all Men; a piece of Christian Skill to be attain'd in a rational Way, by the use of proper Means, and the Blessing of the holy Spirit. If what I have said cannot have Influence on these Persons, I leave them to the further Instruction and Re-proof of a great and venerable Man, whose Name I have mentioned before, a learned Prelate of the Establish'd Church, who speaks thus,

“ For any one to satisfy himself with  
“ a Form of Prayer is still to remain in  
“ Infancy: It is the Duty of every Chri-  
“ stian to grow and increase in all the  
“ Duties of Christianity, *Gifts* as well as  
“ *Graces*. Now how can a Man be said  
“ to live suitable to these Rules, who  
“ doth not put forth himself in some At-  
“ tempts and Endeavours of this kind?  
“ And if it be a fault not to strive and  
“ labour after this Gift, much more is it  
“ to jeer and despise it by the Name of  
“ *extempore Prayer*, and *praying by the Spi-*  
“ *rit*; which Expressions (as they are  
“ frequently used by some Men by way  
“ of

“ of Reproach) are for the most part a  
 “ Sign of a profane Heart, and such  
 “ as are altogether Strangers from the  
 “ Power and Comfort of this Duty.

My Business here is to apply my self  
 to those who have some Sense of their  
 Obligation to Prayer, and of the Impos-  
 sibility of answering all their Necessities  
 by any set Forms whatsoever, but thro’  
 a Coldness and Indifferency in things of  
 Religion take no Pains to acquire the  
 Gift, or content themselves with so slight  
 and imperfect a Degree of it, that them-  
 selves or others are not much the bet-  
 ter. It is this sort of Christians that I  
 wou’d stir up and awaken to Diligence  
 in seeking so valuable an Attainment.

But here I would have it again ob-  
 serv’d, that the Qualification I recom-  
 mend doth not consist in a Treasure of  
 sublime Notions, florid Phrases and  
 gay Eloquence, but merely in a compe-  
 tent supply of Religious Thoughts which  
 are the fit Materials of a Prayer, and a  
 Readiness to express them in plain and  
 proper Words with a free and natural  
 Decency.

I. The *first Argument* or Persuasive I  
 shall draw from the *Design and Dignity*  
*of this Gift.*

There

There is such a thing as Correspondence with Heaven, and Prayer is a great Part of it while we dwell on Earth. Who would not be ambitious to correspond with Heaven? Who would not be willing to learn to pray? This is the Language wherein God hath appointed the Sons of *Adam*, who are but Worms and Dust, to address the King of Glory their Maker; and shall there be any among the Sons of *Adam* that will not learn this Language? Shall Worms and Dust refuse this Honour and Privilege? This is the Speech which the Sons of God use in talking with their heavenly Father; and shall not all the Children know how to speak it? This is the Manner and Behaviour of a Saint, and these the Expressions of his Lips while his Soul is breathing in a divine Air, and stands before God. Why should not every Man be acquainted with this manner of Address, that he may join in Practice with all the Saints, and have Access at all times to the Greatest and the Best of Beings?

There are indeed some sincere Christians who daily worship God, and yet they are often labouring for want of Matter, and are perpetually at a loss for proper Expressions. They have but a  
mean



mean Attainment of this holy Skill; but it is neither their Honour nor their Interest to perform so Divine a Work with so many human Weaknesses, and yet be satisfied with them. There are Children that can but just cry after their Father, and stammer out a broken Word or two by which he can understand their Meaning; but these are Infants and un-grown. The Father had rather see his Children advancing to Manhood, and entertaining themselves daily with that large and free Converse with himself which he allows, and to which he graciously invites them.

Prayer is a sacred and appointed Means to obtain all the Blessings that we want, whether they relate to this Life or the Life to come; and shall we not know how to use the Means God has appointed for our own Happiness? Shall so glorious a Privilege lye unimproy'd thro' our own Neglect?

Were the Business of Prayer nothing else but to come and beg Mercy of God, it would be the Duty of every Man to know how to draw up such Petitions, and present them in such a way as becomes a mortal Petitioner: But Prayer is a Work of much larger Extent. When a holy Soul comes before God he hath  
much

much more to say than merely to beg. He tells his God what a Sense he hath of the divine Attributes, and what high Esteem he pays to his Majesty, his Wisdom, his Power, and his Mercy. He talks with him about the Works of Creation, and stands wrapt up in Wonder. He talks about the Grace and Mystery of Redemption, and is yet more fill'd with Admiration and Joy. He talks of all the Affairs of Nature, Grace and Glory, he speaks of his Works of Providence, of Love and Vengeance in this and the future World. Infinite and glorious are the Subjects of this Holy Communion between God and his Saints. And shall we content our selves with Sighs and Groans and a few short Wishes, and deprive our Souls of so rich, so divine, so various a Pleasure, for want of knowing how to furnish out such Meditations, and to speak this blessed Language?

How excellent and valuable is this *Skill of Praying* in comparison of the many meaner Arts and Accomplishments of human Nature that we labour Night and Day to obtain? What Toil do Men daily undergo for seven Years together to acquire the Knowledge of a Trade and Business in this present Life? Now the

the greatest part of the Business between us and Heaven is transacted in the way of Prayer: With how much more Diligence should we seek the Knowledge of this heavenly Commerce, than any thing that concerns us meerly on Earth? How many Years of our short Life are spent to *learn the Greek, the Latin, and the French Tongues*, that we may hold Correspondence abroad among the living Nations, or converse with the Writings of the Dead? And shall not the Language wherein we converse with Heaven and the Living God be thought worth equal Pains? How nicely do some Persons study the *Art of Conversation*, that they may be accepted in all Company, and share in the Favour of Men? Is not the same Care due to seek all Methods of Acceptance with God, that we may approve our selves in his Presence? What a high Value is set upon *Human Oratory*, or the *Art of Perswasion*, whereby we are fitted to discourse and prevail with our Fellow-Creatures? And is this Art of Divine Oratory of no Esteem with us, which teaches us to utter our inward Breathings of Soul, and plead and prevail with our Creator thro' the Assistance of the Holy Spirit and Mediation of our Lord Jesus?

O let the *Excellency and high Value* of this Gift of Prayer engage our Earnestness and Endeavours in Proportion to its Superiour Dignity: Let us *cover the best of Gifts* with the warmest desire, and pray for it with ardent Supplications, 1 Cor. xii. 31.

II. *Another Argument* may be borrow'd from our very Character and Profession as Christians; some measure of the Gift of Prayer is of great Necessity and universal Use to all that are called by the Name.

Shall we profess to be Followers of *Christ*, and not know how to speak to the Father? Are we commanded to pray always, and upon all Occasions, to be constant and fervent in it, and shall we be contented with Ignorance and Incapacity to obey this Command? Are we invited by the warmest Exhortations, and encouraged by the highest Hopes to draw near to God with all our Wants and our Sorrows, and shall we not learn to express those Wants and pour out those Sorrows before the Lord? Is there a way made for our access to the Throne by the Blood and Intercession of *Jesus Christ*, and shall we not know how to form a Prayer to be sent to Heaven, and spread before the Throne by this glorious Intercession? Is his Holy Spirit



Spirit promised to teach us to pray, and shall a Christian be careless or unwilling to receive such Divine Teachings?

There is not any Faculty in the whole Christian Life that is called out into so frequent Exercise as this, and it is a most unhappy thing to be always at a loss to perform the Work which daily Necessity requires and daily Duty demands. Will a Person profess to be a *Scholar* that cannot Read? Shall any Man pretend to be a *Minister* that cannot Preach? And it is but a poor Pretence we make to Christianity, if we are not able at least in Secret to supply our selves with a few Meditations or Expressions to continue a little in this work of Prayer.

Remember then, O Christian, this is not a Gift that belongs to Ministers alone, nor alone to Governors of Families, who are under constant Obligation to pray in Publick; tho' it most highly concerns them to be expert in this *Holy Skill*, that with Courage and Presence of Mind, with Honour and Decency they may discharge this part of their Duty to God in their Congregations and Households. But this Duty hath a farther Extent. Every Man that is joined to a Church of *Christ* should seek after an Ability to help the Church with his Prayers; or at least upon more private

private Occasions to join with a few Fellow-Christians in seeking to God their Father. Nor are Women, tho' they are forbidden *to speak in the Church*, forbid to pray in their own Families, nor with one another in a private Chamber; and I'm perswaded, Christians would ask one another's Assistance more frequently in Prayer upon special Occasions, if a good Gift of Prayer were more commonly sought and more universally obtain'd. Nor would Congregations in the Country be dismiss'd, and whole Lords Days pass without publick Worship where a Minister is suddenly taken sick, if some grave and discreet Christian of good Ability in Prayer would but take that part of Worship upon him, together with the reading some well composed Sermon, and some useful Portion of holy Scripture. Doubtless this would be most acceptable to that God who *loves the Gates of Zion*, or his own publick Ordinances, *more than all the dwellings of Jacob*, or Worship of private Families. *Psalms lxxxvii. 2.*

Thus far is this Gift necessary where-soever social Prayer may be performed. But the Necessity of it reaches farther still: There is not a Man, Woman, or Child, that is capable of seeking God, but is bound to exercise something of the Gift

of Prayer. And those that never have any Call from Providence, to be the Mouth of others in speaking to God, are called daily to speak to God themselves. It is necessary therefore that every Soul should be so far furnish'd with a *Knowledge of the Perfections of God* as to be able to adore them distinctly; should have such an *Acquaintance with its own Wants* as to express them particularly before God, at least in the Conceptions and Language of the Mind; should have such an *Apprehension of the Encouragements to pray*, as to be able to plead with God for Supply; and should have such an *Observation and Remembrance of Divine Mercies*, as to repeat some of them before God with humble Thanksgivings.

III. I would pursue this Persuasive by a *Third Argument* drawn from the *Divine Delight, and exceeding great Advantage* of this Gift to our own Souls, and to the Souls of all that joyn in Prayer with us.

Christians, have ye never felt your Spirits rais'd from a carnal and vain Temper of Mind, to a devout Frame, by a lively Prayer? Have ye not found your whole Souls overspread with holy Affections, and carried up to Heaven with most abundant Pleasure, by the pious and regular Performanee of him that speaks

**Chap. V. to learn to Pray.** 243

to God in Worship? And when ye have been cold and indifferent to divine Things, have ye not felt that heavy and listless Humour expell'd, by joyning with the warm and lively Expressions of a Person skillful in this Duty? How sweet a Refreshment have ye found under inward Burdens of Mind, or outward Afflictions, when in broken Language you have told them to your Minister, and he hath spread them before God, and that in such words as have spoke your whole Soul and your Sorrows? and you have experienced a sweet Serenity and Calm of Spirit; you have risen up from your Knees with your Countenance no more sad: And have ye not wished for the same Gift your selves, that ye might be able upon all Occasions thus to address the Throne of Grace, and pour out all your Hearts in this manner before your God? But what a sad Inconvenience is it to live in such a World as this, where we are liable daily to so many new Troubles and Temptations, and not be able to express them to God in Prayer; unless we find them written in the words of a Form? and how hard is it to find any Form suited to all our new Wants and new Sorrows?

At other times what divine Impressions of Holiness have ye felt in publick Wor-



ship in the Congregation where this Duty hath been perform'd with holy Skill and Fervency? And in that Prayer you have receiv'd more solid Edification than from the whole Sermon. How dead have you been to all sinful Temptations, and how much devoted to God? And do ye not long to be able to pray thus in your Households and in your own Closets? Would it not be a Pleasure for Men to be thus able to entertain their whole Families daily? and for Christians thus to entertain one another when they meet to pray to their common God and Father? and to help one another at this rate onward to the World of Praise? When the Disciples had just been Witnesses of the Devotion of our Lord, *Luke xi. 1.* who spake as never Man spake, their Hearts grew warm under the Words of that Blessed Worshipper, and one of them in Name of the rest cry'd out, *Lord, teach us to pray too.*

Thus a good Attainment of this Gift is made a happy Instrument of Sanctification as well as Comfort by the co-working Power of the blessed Spirit.

But on the other hand, hath not your painful Experience sometimes taught you that Zeal and Devotion hath been cooled and almost quenched by the vain Repetitions

titions or weak and wandering Thoughts of some Fellow-Christian that leads the Worship? And at another time a well fram'd Prayer of beautiful Order and Language hath been render'd disagreeable by some unhappy Tones and Gestures, so that you have been ready to long for the Conclusion, and have been weary of Attendance.

Who then would willingly remain ignorant of such an Attainment, which is so sweet and successful an Instrument to advance Religion in the Powers and Pleasures of it in their own Hearts, and the Hearts of all Men that are round about them?

IV. *The Honour of God and the Credit of Religion in the World* will afford me another Spring of *Arguments* to excite you to attain this Skill of Prayer.

The great God esteems himself dishonour'd when we do not pay him the *best Worship* we are capable of. The Work of the Lord must not be done negligently. It is highly for his Honour that we be furnished with the *best Talents* for his Service, and that we employ them in the *best Manner*. This discovers to the World the inward high Esteem and Veneration we have for our Maker: This gives him Glory in the Eyes of Men.

But to neglect utterly this Gift of Prayer and to serve him daily with a few sudden Thoughts, with crude and improper Expressions that never cost us any thing but the labour of our Lips while we speak, this is not the way to sanctifie his Name among Men.

There is a sinful Sloth and Indifference in Religion, that hath tempted some Men to believe that God is no curious and exact Inquirer into outward Things: And if they can but persuade themselves their Intentions are right, they imagine that for the Substance and Form of their Sacrifice any thing will serve: And as tho' he were not a God of Order they address him often in Confusion. Because the *Heart* is the chief thing in Divine Worship (like some foolish *Israelite*) they are regardless what *Beast* they offer him so it hath but a *Heart*. But the Prophet *Malachy* thunders with divine Indignation and Jealousie against such Worshipers. *Ye have brought that which was torn and lame and the sick, should I accept this at your hand? I am a great King, saith the Lord of Hosts, and my name is dreadful.* Mal. i. 13, 14. He upbraids us with sharp Resentment, and bids us *offer it to our Governour*, and asks, if he will be pleased with it? Now our Consciences sufficiently

sufficiently inform us how careful we are when we make an Address to an earthly Governour, to have our Thoughts well ordered and Words well chosen, as well as to tender it with a loyal Heart: And may not our supream Governour in Heaven expect a due Care in ordering our Thoughts, and chusing our Words, so far at least as to answer all the Designs of Prayer, and so far as is consistent with the Necessity of so frequent Addresses to him and our other Christian Duties?

*The Credit of Religion in the World* is much concern'd in the honourable Discharge of the Duty of Prayer.

There is an *inward Beauty* in Divine Worship that consists in the devout Temper of the Worshippers, and the lively Exercise of holy Affections; but of this God only is Witness who sees the Heart. There is also an *outward Beauty* that arises from a decent and acceptable Performance of all the Parts of it that come within the Notice of our Fellow-Creatures; that those that observe us may be forc'd to acknowledge the Excellency of Religion in our Practice of it.

Where Worship is perform'd by immediate Inspiration, a natural Order of Things and a becoming Behaviour is requir'd.



quir'd in him especially who leads the Worship. This is the Design of the Apostle in his Advice to the *Corinthians*, 1 Cor. xiv. 40. *Let all things be done decently and in order.* i. e. Let such a prudent Conduct, such a regular and rational Management in all the Parts of Worship be found among you, as gives a natural Beauty to human Actions, and will give a visible Glory to the Acts of Religion. Where this Advice is followed, *if the unlearned and unbeliever, i. e. ignorant and profane, come into the assembly, they will fall down and worship God, and report God is in you of a truth,* v. 25. But if ye are guilty of Disorder in speaking, and break the Rules of natural Light and Reason in uttering your Inspirations, *the unlearned and unbelievers will say, ye are mad,* tho' your Words may be the Dictates of the holy Spirit.

Much more is this applicable to our common and ordinary Performance of Worship. When an unskilful Person speaks in Prayer with a heaviness and penury of Thought, with mean or improper Language, with a false and offensive tone of Voice, or accompanies his Words with aukward Motions, what Slanders are thrown upon our Practice? A whole Party of Christians is ridicul'd,  
and

and the Scoffer saith, *we are mad.* But when a Minister or Master of a Family with a fluency of devout Sentiments and Language offers his Petitions and Praises to God in the Name of all that are present, and observes all the Rules of natural Decency in his Voice and Gesture, how much Credit is done to our Profession hereby, even in the Opinion of those who have no Kindness for our way of Worship? And how effectually doth such a Performance confute the pretended Necessity of imposing Forms? How gloriously doth it triumph over the Slanders of the Adversary, and force a Conviction upon the Mind, that there is something divine and heavenly among us?

I cannot represent this in a better manner than is done by an ingenious Author of the last Age, who being a Courtier in the Reigns of the two Brothers *Charles* and *James* the Second, can never lye under the Suspicion of being a Dissenter, and that is the late *Marquiss of Halifax*. This noble Writer in a little Book under a borrow'd Character gives his own Sentiments of Things. He tells us that  
 “ He is far from relishing the impertinent  
 “ wanderings of those, who pour out  
 “ long Prayers upon the Congregation,

“ and all from their own Stock; a barren Soil, which produces Weeds instead of Flowers; and by this means they expose Religion it self, rather than promote Mens Devotions: On the other side, there may be too great Restraint put upon Men, whom God and Nature hath distinguish'd from their Fellow-Labourers, by blessing them with a happier Talent, and by giving them not only good Sense, but a powerful Utterance too; has enabled them to gush out upon the attentive Auditory, with a mighty Stream of devout and unaffected Eloquence; when a Man so qualified, endued with Learning too, and above all, adorn'd with a good Life, breaks out into a warm and well deliver'd Prayer before his Sermon, it has the appearance of a divine Rapture; he raises and leads the Hearts of the Assembly in another Manner than the most compos'd or best study'd Form of Set Words can ever do: And the *Pray wee's*, who serve up all their Sermons with the same garnishing, would look like so many Statues, or Men of Straw in the Pulpit, compar'd with those who speak with such a powerful Zeal, that Men are tempted at the

“ Moment

“ Moment to believe Heaven it self has  
“ dictated their Words to ’em.

V. *A Fifth Persuasive* to seek the Gift of Prayer shall be drawn from the *Easiness of attaining it*, with the common Assurances of the holy Spirit. *Easie* I call it, in comparison of the long Toil and Difficulty that Men go through, in order to acquire a common Knowledge in Arts, Sciences or Trades in this World; tho’ it is not to be expected without some Pains and Diligence.

Some young Persons may be so foolish and unhappy as to make two or three bold Attempts to pray in Company, before they have well learnt to pray in Secret; and finding themselves much at a loss and bewildered in their Thoughts, or confounded for want of Presence of Mind, they have abandon’d all Hopes, and contented themselves with saying, *It is impossible.* And as they have tempted God by rashly venturing upon such an Act of Worship without any due Care and Preparation, so they have afterward thrown the Blame of their own Sloth on God himself, and cried, *It is a meer Gift of Heaven, but God hath not bestow’d it on me.* This is as if a Youth who had just begun to read Logic, should attempt immediately to dispute in a publick School, and



and finding himself baffled and confounded should cast away his Book, renounce his Studies, and say, *I shall never learn it, it is impossible.* Whereas when we seek any Attainment, we must begin regularly, and go on gradually toward Perfection with Patience and Labour: Let but the Rules recommended in the *second Chapter* of this Treatise, for acquiring the Gift of Prayer, be duely followed, and I doubt not but a Christian of ordinary Capacity may in time gain so much of this Skill, as to answer the Demands of his Duty, and his Station.

Let a Man obtain a tolerable Ability to pray in Secret, and exercise it there often before he attempt it in Company. Let him also begin first with one or two of his intimate Acquaintance, or his Inferiors, where he may fall under no concern of Mind because of the Hearers, nor suffer Confusion for want of Courage. Let him be short at first, and offer up a few common Requests, and proceed by Degrees to enlarge and fulfil all the Worship in his Family in a more publick Manner:

Rather than I would be utterly destitute of this Gift of Prayer, I would make such an Experiment as this. Once a Month I would draw up a new Prayer  
for

for my self in Writing for Morning and Evening, and for the Lord's Day, according to all Parts of this Duty described in the first Chapter of this Book, or out of the Scriptures that Mr. Henry hath collected in his *Method of Prayer*. I would use it constantly all that Month, yet never confining my self all along to those very same words, but giving my self a Liberty to put in or leave out, or enlarge according to the present Workings of my Heart, or Occurrences of Providence. Thus by degrees I would write less and less, at last setting down little more than Heads or Hints of Thought or Expression; just as Ministers learn by degrees to leave off their Sermon-notes in Preaching. I would try whether a Year or two of this Practice will not furnish me with an Ability in some measure to pray without this help; always making it one of my Petitions, that God would pour out more of his Spirit upon me, and teach me the Skill of Praying.

*Obj.* If any Christian that loves his Ease should abuse this Proposal, and say, "If I may use this Prayer of my own Framing for a Month together, why may I not use it all my Life? And so  
" give

“ give my self no further Trouble about  
“ learning to pray?

*Ans.* 1. I would *first* desire such a Man to read over again the great Inconveniencies mentioned in the *second Chapter*, that arise from a perpetual Use of Forms, and the danger of Confinement to them.

*Ans.* 2. I would say in the *second Place*; The Matter of Prayer is almost infinite: It extends to every thing we can have to transact with our Maker, and it is impossible in a few Pages to mention particularly one tenth Part of the Subjects of our Converse with God. But in drawing up new Prayers every Month, in time we may run thro’ a great Part of those Subjects, and grow by degrees to be habitually furnished for Converse with him on all Occasions whatsoever: Which can never be done by dwelling always upon one Form or two. As Children that learn to read at School, daily take out new Lessons, that they may be able at last to read every thing, which they would not well attain, if they always dwelt on the same Lesson.

*Ans.* 3. Besides, there is a blessed Variety of Expressions in Scripture to represent our Wants, and Sorrows, and Dangers: The Glory, Power and Grace  
of

of God, his Promises and Covenant, our Hopes and Discouragements; and sometimes one Expression, sometimes another may best suit our present turn of Thought and Temper of our Minds. It is good therefore to have as large a Furniture of this kind as possible, that we might never be at a loss to express the inward Sentiments of our Soul, and clothe our Desires and Wishes in such words as are most exactly fitted to them.

*Ans.* 4. Tho' God is not the more affected with Variety of Words and Arguments in Prayer, (for he acts upon other Principles borrow'd from himself) yet our Natures are more affected with such a Variety. Our Graces are drawn into more vigorous Exercise, and by our Importunity in pleading with God with many Arguments, we put our selves more directly under the Promise that is made to importunate Petitioners; and we become fitter to receive the Mercies we seek.

*Obj.* If any Christian on the other hand should forbid all use of such Compositions, as supposing them utterly unlawful and quenching the Spirit.

*Ans.* I would humbly reply, There is no danger of that while we do not rest  
in



in them, as our designed *End*, but use them only as *Means* to teach us to pray, and never once confine our selves to them without liberty of Alteration. 'Tis the Saying of a great Divine, "Tho' set  
" Forms made by others, be as a Crutch  
" or *help of our Insufficiency*, yet those  
" which we compose our selves, are a  
" *Fruit of our Sufficiency*: And that a  
" Man ought not to be so confined by  
" any premeditated Form, as to neglect  
" any special Infusion. He should so prepare himself, as if he expected no Assistance; and he should so depend upon divine Assistance, as if he had made  
" no Preparation.

Here, if I might obtain leave of my Fathers in the Ministry, I would say this to younger Students: That if in their private Years of Study they pursued such a Course once a Week as I have here described, I'm persuaded their Gifts would be richly improv'd, their ministerial Labours would be more universally acceptable to the World; their Talents would be attractive of Multitudes to their Place of Worship; the Hearers would be rais'd in their Spirits while the Preacher prays with a regular and divine Eloquence; and they would receive

Chap. V. *to learn to Pray.* 257

ceiye those Sermons with double Influence and Success, which are attended with such Prayers.

VI. The *last* Attempt I shall make to convince Christians of the necessity of seeking this Gift, shall be meerly by *representing the Ill Consequences of the Neglect of it.* If you take no pains to learn to Pray, you will unavoidably fall into one of these *three* Evils.

Either *First*, you will drag on heavily in the work of Prayer all your Days, even in your Closets as well as your Family, and be liable to so many Imperfections in the performance, as will rob your own Soul of a great part of the Benefit and the Delight of this sweet Duty, and give neither Pleasure nor Profit to them that hear you: The Ignorant part of your Household will sleep under you, while the more Knowing are in pain for you. And perhaps you will sometimes think to make amends for the dulness of the Devotion by increasing the length of it; But this is to add one Error to another, and lay more Burdens upon them that are weary.

Or *Secondly*, If you find that you cannot carry on the Constancy of this Duty with tolerable Satisfaction, you will give your self up to a few set Forms, and rest  
in

in them from Year to Year. Now tho' it may be possible for some Persons to use a Form without Deadness and Formality of Spirit, yet such as from a meer Principle of Sloth neglect to learn to pray, are most likely to fall into Formality and Slothfulness in the use of Forms, and the Power of Religion will be lost.

Or in the *last* place, if you have been Bred up with an universal hatred of all Forms of Prayer, and yet know not how to pray without them, you will grow first inconstant in the discharge of this Duty; every little Hinderance will put you by; and at last perhaps you will leave it off intirely, and your House and your Closet too in time will be without Prayer.

Christians, which of these *three Evils* will ye chuse? Can ye be satisfied to Drudge on to your Lives end, among Improprieties and Indecencies; and thus expose Prayer to Contempt? Or will your Minds be easie to be confin'd for ever to a Form or two of Slothful Devotion? Or shall Prayer be banish'd out of your Houses, and all appearance of Religion be lost among you?

Parents, which of these *Evils* do ye chuse for your Children? you charge them

Chap. V. *to learn to Pray.* 259

them to pray daily, you tell them the Sin and Danger of dwelling always upon Prayer-Books, and yet you scarce ever give them any regular Instructions how to perform this Duty. How can ye expect they should maintain Religion honourably in their Families, and avoid the things you forbid? But whatsoever ill Consequences attend them hereafter, consider what share of the Guilt will lye at the Door of those who never took any pains to teach them to pray.

While I am perswading Christians with so much Earnestness to seek the *Gift of Prayer*, surely none will be so weak as to imagine *the Grace and Spirit of Prayer* may be neglected. Without some degrees of common Influence from the Blessed Spirit, the Gift is not to be attain'd: And without the Exercise of Grace in this Duty, the Prayer will never reach Heaven, nor prevail with God. He is not taken with the brightest Forms of Worship, if the Heart be not there. Be the Thoughts never so Divine, the Expressions never so sprightly, and deliver'd with all the sweet and moving Accents of Speech, it is all in his Esteem but a fair Carcass without a Soul: It is a meer Picture of Prayer, a Dead Beauty which cannot Charm; a lifeless Offering  
which



which the living God will never accept; nor will our great High-Priest ever present it to the Father.

But these things do not fall directly under my present Design. I would therefore recommend my Readers to those Treatises that inforce the Necessity of spiritual Worship, and describe the Glory of inward Devotion above the best outward Performances. Then shall they learn the Perfection of Beauty in this part of Worship, when the Gift and Grace of Prayer are happily joyned: Then shall their Converse with God be maintained in the secret Pleasure and Success of it, and appear before Men in its full Loveliness, and attractive Power. Then shall Religion look like itself, Divine and Heavenly, and shine in all the Lustre it is capable of here upon Earth.

*The E N D.*

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# TABLE

OF THE

## CONTENTS.

### The Introduction.

<b>W</b> HAT is Prayer in general,	Page 1
Several kinds of Prayer,	2
The Division and Order of this Treatise,	3

### CHAP. I.

#### The Nature of Prayer.

Sect. 1. Invocation,	4
Sect. 2. Adoration,	6
Sect. 3. Confession,	10
Sect. 4. Pasion,	14
Sect. 5. Pleading,	20
Sect. 6. Profession or Self-Dedication,	29
Sect. 7. Thanksgiving,	35
Sect. 8. Blessing,	40
Sect. 9. Conclusion,	41

### CHAP.

# THE CONTENTS.

## CHAP. II.

### The Gift of Prayer.

Sect. 1. *What the Gift of Prayer is, and why so called,*

P. 44

Sect. 2. *In seeking the Gift of Prayer two Extreams to be avoided,*

1st Extream. *A Confinement to Forms,* 46

*Forms of Prayer in some Cases useful,* 47

*Inconveniencies of Confinement to Forms,* 49

2d Extream. *Neglect of Premeditation,* 56

*What is Conceiv'd or Free Prayer,* 57

*How it differs from extemporary Prayer,* 58

*When Premeditation is less necessary,* ibid.

*Inconveniencies of utter neglect of Premeditation,*

59

*Five Things considerable in the Gift of Prayer,*

61

Sect. 3. *The Matter of Prayer,* 62

*Rules to furnish us with Matter,* ibid.

*Directions concerning the Matter of Prayer,* 72

*Prayer must be suited to the Time and Place, &c.*

73

*Inconveniencies of affected Length in Prayer,* 78

Sect. 4. *The Method of Prayer,* 82

*General Rules of Method,* 83

*The most natural Method exemplify'd,* 88

*No necessity of one Method,* 89

Sect. 5. *Of Expression in Prayer,* 91

*Directions to attain a Treasure of Expressions,* 93

*Cautions about Expressions of Scripture,* 98

*Rules about the Choice and Use of proper Expressions,* 102

*What are the Improprieties of Expressions that must be avoided,* 104

*What are pathological Ways of speaking in Prayer,*

112

Sect.

# The CONTENTS.

Sect. 6.	<i>The Voice of Prayer,</i>	p. 118
	<i>A general Rule for managing the Voice,</i>	119
	<i>Particular Directions about the Voice,</i>	120
	<i>Of proper and improper Accents in Speech,</i>	125
Sect. 7.	<i>The Gesture in Prayer,</i>	128
	<i>Postures of the whole Body,</i>	129
	<i>Postures of particular Parts,</i>	132
Sect. 8.	<i>Four general Directions about the Gift of Prayer,</i>	139

## CHAP. III.

### Of the Grace of Prayer.

Sect. 1.	<i>What the Grace of Prayer is,</i>	145
	<i>And how it differs from the Gift,</i>	ibid.
Sect. 2.	<i>The Graces that belong to the whole Work of Prayer,</i>	159
Sect. 3.	<i>The Graces that belong to the several Parts of Prayer,</i>	154
Sect. 4.	<i>Directions to attain the Grace of Prayer,</i>	161

## CHAP. IV.

### Of the Spirit of Prayer.

Sect. 1.	<i>Arguments to prove the Spirit of God doth assist his People in Prayer.</i>	169
Sect. 2.	<i>How the Spirit assists in Prayer.</i>	183
	<i>Who Attribute too little to the Spirit,</i>	ibid.
	<i>Who Attribute too much to the Spirit,</i>	184
	<i>Seven Particulars of the Spirit's Assistance,</i>	187
	<i>A short Recapitulation of them,</i>	199
	<i>An Address to the Reason of Men on this Subject,</i>	200
	<i>An Address to Christians from Scripture,</i>	201

Sect. 3.



# The CONTENTS.

<i>Sect. 3. Cautions about the Influence of the Spirit,</i>	<i>p. 202</i>
<i>Of violent Impulses to Prayer from the Devil, or guilty Conscience.</i>	<i>203</i>
<i>The ordinary Assistance of the Spirit seldom sen- sible,</i>	<i>204</i>
<i>Of extraordinary Assistance in Prayer.</i>	<i>206</i>
<i>The Gift of Prayer, no measure of the Spirit of Prayer,</i>	<i>211</i>
<i>The Assistance of the Spirit various, and not con- stant,</i>	<i>217</i>
<i>Sect. 4. Directions to obtain and keep the Spirit of Prayer,</i>	<i>218</i>
<i>Directions to recover the Spirit of Prayer,</i>	<i>227</i>

## C H A P V.

### A Persuasive to learn to Pray.

<i>Who are the Persons here address'd to,</i>	<i>232</i>
<i>The Excellency of the Gift of Prayer,</i>	<i>234</i>
<i>The Necessity and Universal Use of it,</i>	<i>239</i>
<i>The Pleasures and rich Advantages of it to our selves and others,</i>	<i>242</i>
<i>The Glory of God, and the Credit of Religion are concern'd in it,</i>	<i>244</i>
<i>A beautiful Paragraph cited from my Lord Ha- lifax,</i>	<i>249</i>
<i>The Gift of Prayer not hard to be attain'd,</i>	<i>251</i>
<i>Directions how to begin the Use of it,</i>	<i>252</i>
<i>An Experiment to teach us to Pray.</i>	<i>ibid.</i>
<i>The evil Consequences of the Neglect of this Gift,</i>	<i>257</i>
<i>The Grace and Spirit of Prayer still most necessa- ry to be sought,</i>	<i>259</i>

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